GERHART HAUPTMANN

DRAMATIC WORKS

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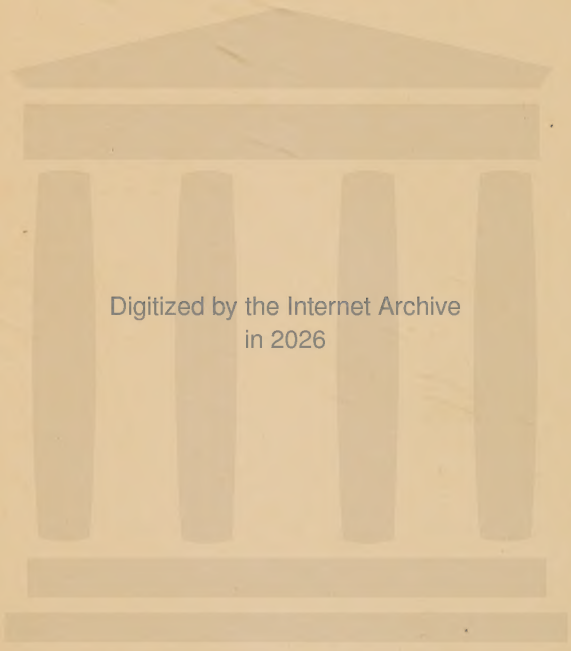

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THE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
Gerhart Hauptmann

VOLUME SEVEN:

COMMEMORATION MASQUE
THE BOW OF ODYSSEUS
ELGA
FRAGMENTS:
I. HELIOS
II. PASTORAL

THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF GERHART HAUPTMANN

(AUTHORIZED EDITION)

EDITED BY LUDWIG LEWISOHN
PROFESSOR IN THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

VOLUME SEVEN
MISCELLANEOUS DRAMAS

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NEW YORK
B. W. HUEBSCH
1917

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THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF GERHART HAUPTMANN

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* Translation not yet published.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The two long pieces that fill the greater part of the final volume of this edition of Hauptmann's dramas represent not only in point of time but also in their substance and method the intellectual if not the artistic culmination of a great career. In the *Commemoration Masque* (1913) so feverishly contended over at the time of its appearance he speaks in a way that has since taken on a tragic solemnity of certain problems of European history; in *The Bow of Odysseus* (1914) he brings the interpretative power of modern psychology to bear upon perhaps the most famous legend of the ancient world.

The *Masque* was written to celebrate the one hundredth anniversay of Germany's liberation from the Napoleonic yoke. The ruthless devastation of the Rhine country by the generals of Louis XIV, the seizure of Strassburg in a time of peace — these things had not been forgotten when, early in the nineteenth century, Germany again lay helpless at the feet of France, and when thousands of German soldiers, forced into the armies of Napoleon, perished in the icy waters of the Beresina. The country arose as one man and began the struggle which ended with Blücher's arrival at Waterloo. In commemorating these events Hauptmann sticks closely to the

concrete facts and personalities of history. But he strives, by his device of a cosmic puppet play, to have these facts and these personalities viewed "under the aspect of eternity." By reawakening, at least symbolically, all the voices, clear or discordant, of that age, he seeks to let the trend of things speak for itself and to apply no retrospective criticism. His personal reaction is evident only in his sharp satire of Jahn and the super-patriots and his contemptuous toleration of the mere soldier as represented by Blücher. The meaning of the *Masque,* which is not easily gathered, and can certainly not be exhausted in a first reading, is thus identical with the meaning of history. It is to be sought for in Fichte's great summons to self-hood and veracity, in the earnest plea of von Stein:

"Think if your France were so fricaseed,
Or England carved that its arteries bleed —
A beautiful statue so shattered and broken . . ."

and in the tragic cry of the German Eagle:

"Till God has sent the redeemer splendid
The German nation they'll try to kill.
But try as they may, 'twill oppose them still.
My ailments come through Inheritance Portal,
Yet I am an eagle and I am immortal."

The form of the piece is more questionable than its substance. Hauptmann, of course, had in mind the glorification of the puppet-play technique and of the old *Knittelvers* that we find in *Faust.* It is also from the second part of *Faust* that he borrowed the device of writing calm and

elevated passages in rimeless Alexandrines. But the sovereign ease and grace of Goethe are lacking here, the effortlessness, the constant union of strength and felicity. Hauptmann's verse is often tormented, mannerised and difficult; the music is often harsh, the expression strained. Yet I find that the *Masque* assumes a higher degree of harmony and coherence upon each new reading. In its far humbler way it is, I suspect, one of those poems which, like the second part of *Faust,* gain clarity and significance from the passage of time.

No such allowance, no allowance, indeed, of any kind need be made for the harsh and tonic beauty, the subtle power of *The Bow of Odysseus.* In Hauptmann's hands the ancient story loses its tinge of sunset romance, its marble and golden statuesqueness; it becomes wilder, more primitive, more human; the stone trembles into life. Odysseus is not the symbolic farer and aspirer of Tennyson, but the wily, much-experienced man of the Homeric world. His wanderings and agonies have brought him a calmer wisdom:

> "There is no hill
> "Upon the earth but may Olympus be."

He has grasped the realities that count:

> "My golden homeland gave
> Me golden fruits and draughts of golden wine
> And golden happiness. Did I, since faring
> From that dear land, draw nearer to the gods?"

The years have broken and yet fortified him:

"To suffer more I have
Suffered too deep."

And it is only gradually, it is only under the sting of a profoundly human problem that he can arise in his old might:

"In argent armor clanging death and doom."

That problem, the great unsolved psychological riddle of the story is, of course, the problem of Penelope's character. Amid "the surge and thunder of the Odyssey" we do not question the facts. Penelope is faithful; she is, in truth, the very type of fidelity. Why then does she not dismiss the wooers? Why has she promised to choose among them? Why the trick of the eternally spun and eternally unravelled shroud of Laertes? In Hauptmann's play this is the searching problem that Odysseus must face, this is the tragic doubt that must pierce him. He thinks of the nature of women:

"Are they not called
Circe, Calypso, Helena and even —
Even Clytemnestra?"

To find comfort he must summon the memories of his youth, of his own wooing of Penelope, that

"steel-bright and strange
Long-thighed, sweet Maenad."

For even then the young warriors of her land swarmed about her,

"The while Penelope in icy mood
Remained inviolate amid the flames."

She has not really changed. She has always been enigmatic and silvery and serene and played with the passions of men. Therefore Odysseus, red with slaughter, turns sadly at last to his son:

"What will thy mother say, O Telemach,
That I her favorite play-things broke so soon."

Penelope does not appear in the play at all. Yet the vision of her that Hauptmann gives us is one of the great things in the modern poetic drama. Hardly if at all inferior to this portrait is the character of Laertes. Where, except in *King Lear* or *Père Goriot,* does the piteousness of old age move us more deeply than in that speech of Laertes to Euryclea in which he recalls the perished pride and passion of youth and breaks down at the ineffable pathos of his own simple words:

"And thou and I, we play with love no more . . ."?

Nor must one forget the very real but strange and rock-built world in which this action takes place. The gods are no classicised phantoms: their power is a tremor in the air. The thunder is the very voice of Zeus, Pan plays his pipes on the shaggy hills, over the windless sea hovers the malignity of Poseidon. The verse begins haltingly almost harshly. It rarely becomes sweet. But it gathers power and sweep and a poignant, primitive passion.

The other contents of this volume are important in any intelligent study of Hauptmann's mind and art. They all date from a crucial period of his life (1896–1898). In *Hannele* he had, several years before, broken for the first time with consistent naturalism. (Cf. Introduction Vol. IV.) He had been rewarded by the Grillparzer prize. But *Florian Geyer,* his attempt to grapple with a large, historical subject, had failed. He felt himself wandering between two worlds — the world of science and naturalism and social compassion, and a new world of art and brightness and pagan charm. From these facts of his inner life it is easy to gather the meaning of the fine fragment *Helios,* in which Hauptmann describes the mysterious meeting of two worlds, the ancient struggle between Christianity and paganism. From the same source arises, too, the meaning of *Pastoral* in which the artist leaves the terrible cities of men to serve for the ideal of beauty upon the spacious fields, under the freer skies of a greater and a lonelier world.— *Elga,* based upon a short story by Grillparzer, and complete in itself, is characteristic of this period of Hauptmann's development through its employment of the dream technique as a frame work for the story. The drama has always been successful on the stage. It is chiefly interesting in the proof it offers that Hauptmann's abstention from stage-effectiveness of the lower order has been wholly due to the native austerity of his art and thought.

In my version of *The Bow of Odysseus* I have tried, as always, to do justice to my original not only as verse, but as poetry. Far more difficult was the task of Professor Morgan. No one who

has not studied the *Commemoration Masque* in German can appreciate the brilliant skill with which he has so often overcome the almost insuperable difficulties of his text. His rendering should be read in the light of this fact.

Ludwig Lewisohn.

MASQUE

To commemorate the spirit of the
Wars of Liberation

Eighteen Hundred Thirteen, Fourteen
and Fifteen

Performed at the Centennial in Breslau

1913

CHARACTERS

The Director.
Philistiades.
Pythia.
A Boy.
The Knight.
Frederick the Great.
Napoleon.
Talleyrand.
Hegel.
Gymnast Jahn.
Baron von Stein.
Gneisenau.
Scharnhorst.
Heinrich von Kleist.
Fichte.
Blücher.
Athene Germania.
The Fury.
The Eagle.
The Jurist.
John Bull.

Jacobins, Drummers, Women, Hangmen, Masqueraders, Chorus of Birds, French and Prussian Soldiers and Officers, Marshals of Napoleon, Mothers, Students, Populace.

Behind an orchestra a flight of three stages is placed. The first is divided by a curtain. When this opens, another is at once background and a screen for the second stage. When it parts, this second higher stage is visible, with a third curtain as background, which in turn is opened to reveal the third and topmost stage.

In front of the first curtain, black and embroidered with gold stars, steps the Director. *He wears the high cap of the magician and a long robe, both similarly covered with heavenly symbols. He bears a magic wand.*

The Director

But rarely I appear before the curtain
Of that world-stage which I have long directed.
Fair days and foul, I make them both, quite certain
That personally I am not affected.
Yet e'en the finest of all apparatus
We cannot hope will always perfect show:
A cog will break, a wire be snapt, and lo,
This world of show, all hollow at the centre,
This best of worlds has a hiatus,
Such as the breach I am about to enter.
In short, the mime who till this very day
The prologue of this play has always spoken,
Has left the troupe, his contract broken.
We'll get along, have no dismay!

If the director's not afraid of
Your scorn, and knows the stuff he's made of.
Of course I will not reel off word for word
The same old prologue — that would be absurd.
It sprang from my imagination,
As is our wont on such occasion,
But from my head the phrases flit:
Hence, since 'tis easier to compose
Than learn outright what has been writ,
For now a brief account in prose.
How would you call the piece? That's hard to say.
The type's not common in our land and day.
Perhaps a "mimus," mimic supposition?
As when Philistion, the world despising,
Died of the laughter born of his devising?
Yet when I read it with my mental vision,
I find indeed a mimic irony,
But a more strictly modern phantasy.
Well, all is one: whatever be its name,
Its author's head and hand it doth acclaim,
And in its diverse scenes of shifting power
It shows a continent's most fateful hour.
The swaying stage is called, for this production,
Europe, and yet the echoes of the ruction
Extend across to both the hemispheres.
For you, old foot-rest, I could give three cheers:
For what you've borne, and have not met prostration,
This your director knows his obligation.

[*From behind the curtain steps* PHILISTIADES, *a slender youth but scantily clad, with the wings of Hermes on heels and head-gear. He casts a great knapsack at the feet of the* DIRECTOR.

PHILISTIADES

I come again, my hoary, star-crowned sage,
And wait the signal of your sovereign might;
You're still, as ever, bearded, stiff with age,
And aeons have turned your crown a whiter white.
Once more you would — ah yes, your servant knows! —
Mid rage and strife, after so long a while,
Behold some tragic heroes' dying throes,
And smile your soft sardonic childish smile.
A nod from you: I open up my sack,
And set your puppets dancing in a pack.

THE DIRECTOR

No, Philistiades, first look about:
Down yonder sits an audience immense.
To them, not me, that curious, intense,
And silent wait, show what you've trotted out.
Tell them, my lad, just how we ever strive
To mirror life, and whence success derive.
Hide not at all, my ever cheerful son,
How our delightful little plant is run,
And how with Time and Place we do not fuss,
And Aristotle does not worry us.
Air, water, earth, to us they're all the same;
Our troupe's at home in lands of every name,
And e'en high up above the kingdoms three:
Whereof this staff the sign and symbol be.

PHILISTIADES

[*Taking the articles from his sack as required, and showing them.*

Our theatre's both small and great,
As you behold it, so is its state.
Here, for example, a first-sized ball:

That means the earth, as it whirls in the All.
You've seen it now, I lay it aside;
At once it expands both far and wide
And you hear now louder and better the roar
And rush of the Flood, and your glance sweeps o'er
The shores of the ocean, the fruit-bearing land,
The deserts and hills. Now before you stand
The continents five, then, mile upon mile,
The mighty rivers, the mighty places,
The houses, the streets, the cabinet faces,
And we note the tiny insect, with a smile,
That in houses and cabinets bides a while.
Oh, no, 'tis not ants that we had in mind:
Let us praise the lord of the world, mankind.
He calls him godling over the rest,
And may call himself as suits him best.
When seen close by, he becomes a giant.
For instance, observe this little client.
[*He shows some puppets.*
You laugh! With mirth you'll soon be through,
As soon as you've seen the things they do.
They seem to be stiff, but they move quite well,
And are quite unspeakably irritable.
You won't be able to trust your sight
When you see them shoot and stab and fight,
Massacre, murder, and throttle each other.
One loses patience with all this pother.
As a matter of fact, our piece of to-day
Is composed of blood-baths and battle-fray,
A gruesome, horrible omnium-gatherum.
These puppets are Furies, and how they bother 'em!
Then here you see the thunder-machine,
For thunder and lightning are part of the scene.

And here are some gods and genii;
With but few of these our luck we try,
But one or two of them we require,
For you see we shall be in the early Empire.
I lift the sack, and out they dribble
At random, thus: the Delphian Sibyl,
Old Gymnast Jahn and Talleyrand,
German and English generals too,
A Cossack hetman, French marshals a few.
"An eye for an eye and a hand for a hand"—
You hear them mutter and shout and whistle,
And when a pair of them chance to meet,
With powder and ball each other they treat,
Caressing each other with gun and pistol.
Here composers, philosophers, poets gabble,
Peaceable burghers and city rabble:
Puppets, carved to the very life,
And each will bleed at the touch of your knife.

THE DIRECTOR

Stop there, and not too over-hasty.
Excess of speed is never tasty.
Hand me the puppets singly and slow,
And of course the wire to make them go.
First let's just take this puppet unruly;
His name is Nelson, an actor for parties
That take place out on the sea, my hearties!
With such we're not overstocked unduly.
The sublimest fellow! — I tell you truly.
We jestingly call him the Admiral;
He's from over the channel, from the nor'ard.
Now here! we'll show you this other doll:
We call it simply Marshal Forward.
This puppet has hand and heart and head,
Is sometimes a bit of a blow, 'tis said.

But the words of a blunt old fighting man
Should not be laid in the weighing-pan.
A fiery nature, a brilliant actor;
I challenge you, find such another character.
Now comes an article extra scarce:
A Kaiser, a Tsar, and a Prussian King.
But these are very hard to coerce,
We'd better leave them out of the ring.
If one of them a leg should break,
My position 'twould very gravely shake.
Now this, however, is somewhat robuster.
A later model,— it passes muster!
Indeed this puppet's phenomenal,
Entitled the Little Corporal.
It's really unique of its kind, I've found;
I carved it while to the Southland bound
From the holm-oak wood of Corsica,
And it bears my own artist's insignia.
It really was to have been a figure
Than which the earth has had nothing bigger,
But an old dismissed theatrical wight,
Pedro Carbonaro hight,
Put a spoke in the creature's wheel,
And so he's a dubious hero, I feel.
He went to Marseilles and from there to Paree,
For that's where his principal dance was to be,
And he danced so well and withal so quick
That soon all France learned the dancing trick;
In fact all Europe began to dance —
You'll hear the whole tale as the scenes advance.
Queues and curls and boundaries quivered,
Throne-room, steeple, and sentry-box shivered.
Crowns and thrones o'er each other went tumbling,
And over these high and low were stumbling;
But he was not merely a social prancer,

His real pursuit was that of sword-dancer.
Yet later he danced, himself, no more,
But sent other dancers on before.
This actor the world will recall evermore.
He acted now Great Alexander,
And now 'twas Julius Cæsar he played;
But forgetting that he was a different gander,
He mixed up the parts he had essayed:
Now Roman consul, now Charlemagne,
Now Attila, then again Hannibal,
He was this and that, he was everywhere.
He loved the Emperor's pose to maintain.
Before his rout marched a drummer rare,
The drummer Death! a form to appal.
The roll of his drum was deep and hollow,
And all the world at his heels did follow.
From morn till night they onward pressed,
Then all were finally brought to rest.
You see from this that my actor-chap
Is a man of uncommon force and snap.
I gave him permission, for twenty years
To flood the earth with blood and cheers.
As a star he had a troupe most docile;
Now he was a puppet — I call him colossal.
But every stage he at last outgrew,
And the whole world into the fray he drew,
Till he brought his director into danger,
Although to his tricks I was far from a stranger.
Returned to the doll-box and black-listed,
From his active career he then desisted.
I was sorry, but him I had to abandon,
Or the firm would have had not a leg to stand on.
He's had a rest now, long and fine,
But if he refuses to toe the line,
So let him again on the stage be going,

And acts like a stream, his banks o'erflowing,
Once more he goes, to eternal rest,
Right back to the manager's rubbish-chest.

[*The* Director *has displayed several puppets, lastly that which represents Napoleon Bonaparte. He now returns them to* Philistiades.

Philistiades

'Tis true without exaggeration
He's lost who loses his approbation.
Signor Balsamo, Cagliostro by name,
Is a baby beside him at this little game.
Grand-Master of all your Lodges and Orders,
He knows how to manage creations and murders.
White magic and black, they're his at call,
And philosophy, too, that knows it all.

The Director

Enough, to action let us now proceed;
I hope our toys are ready for word and deed.
Our stage is this platform, bald and bare:
Our performance takes place, so to speak, *plein air*.
We begin with some German mysticism
And end with quasi-classicism.
" His Rhodus, hic salta "— that's our gait.
We've no wings, no prompter to set us straight.

[*Unseen music.*

Curtains alone are our simple wile.
These habits, sanctioned by agelong custom,
Not God himself has the power to bust 'em,
So long as Creation's so full of guile.
But you'll be surprised by our stars and " supes: "
Just try your casts of different grades,
You'll find neither local nor roving troupes

To whom we can't give cards and spades.
Why, just this music, this grand confusion,
It gives you at once the whole Revolution.
All praise to Sebastian Bach, the Cantor:
Our Ariel's art you'll witness instanter.
Already you sniff the Jacobin caps,
The blood-soaked streets and the bloodier scraps;
You can fairly see the wild *Carmagnole,*
And a robber's drawn pistol crowning the whole.
A master-director runs the game,
And puts a Dantesque fancy to shame.
Here's Greedy-gut and Stow-the-booty.
They're coming! Now isn't that mob a beauty?

[*A furious Paris mob of the time of the Revolution throngs into the orchestra and thence gets at the* DIRECTOR *and* PHILISTIADES.

THE WOMEN

Freedom! Equality! Brotherhood!

THE DIRECTOR

[*Vehemently.*

You come too soon, the times are rude.
Out, out! Your cue has not been spoken.

FIRST JACOBIN

Scoundrel, you want your cranium broken?

THE DIRECTOR

I'm the director!

SECOND JACOBIN

Who?

First Woman

Aye, who?

Third Jacobin

Out with him! and the apprentice too!
Infamous wire-puller! Humanity's flayer!
Freedom, freedom! She is our mother.
Devil take it! Don't call me a player:
I'm known, a Septembrist am I, no other.
Burn down the house! Aye, aye, that's good!
No pasteboard and canvas for us, but blood.

[*The* Director *and* Philistiades *have been thrust behind the curtain. In the orchestra meanwhile there develops a Parisian street scene of the time of the Revolution. The mob dances the Carmagnole. Human heads are borne about on pikes. The* First Jacobin, *standing on the first stage, tries to get a hearing. In vain. Then the* Drummer Death *appears, steps forward to the edge of the stage, and beats a long roll. Hereupon quiet ensues.*

First Jacobin

Come on, we've got our footing clear.
Hell and Satan! No jesting here.
Communal ownership! Human right!
No slaves are we! The lords are in flight!
The People alone has omnipotent power:
You are greater than God, yourself is God.
Save you, no avenger over the sod.
All the People's foes may the plague devour!

FOURTH JACOBIN

[*Holding blood-flecked arms high in the air.*
Who am I? A September butcher.
Once a Bourbon baker, consider
Me now an aristocrat-unlidder.
I know my trade, I've done my part.
[*He shows a dagger.*
Here's my tooth, as keen as a dart;
With it I've done some honest biting,
Torn the guts from each paunch inviting.
The Revolution — hip, hip, hooray!
Freedom breaking forces had risen,
And so we cleaned out every prison
From the infamous conspirators' brood.
We fairly waded in traitors' blood.
Officers, priests, and city rapscallions,
Palace-parasites, Swiss battalions,
We struck them down like so many cattle;
The city reeked with the steam of the battle.
But we had our little joke, at least.
The man who works deserves his feast.
The Princess Lamballe was a bite to allure you:
We lit'rally tore her to bits, I assure you.
But that was the final scene of the fray,
For first we had at her with merry play:
You know she was furnished without and within.
La Force shook with mirth at the jolly din.

FIRST JACOBIN

I also am a *Septembriseur.*
Long live the Terror! *Terreur! terreur!*
I fished in a body as though 'twas a pocket,
To pull the quivering heart from its socket;
I held it as a cat a captured mouse,
And sucked it bare as a haunted house.

People, so must you gobble and guzzle,
That is the genuine sacrament
That's neither by church nor parson sent.
With such a baptism wet your muzzle.
Retaliate, down with your old oppressors!
Freedom shall conquer, if we're the aggressors.

[*The curtain opens, revealing the guillotine and* SAMSON, *the executioner of the Terror, standing beside it and holding a severed head aloft. The* DRUMMER DEATH *beats a muffled roll.*

THE POPULACE

[*Roars.*

The Veto, the Veto! Capet, hooray!

FIRST VOICE

Look, the Veto's making a pool!

SECOND VOICE

Where's his Jacobin cap, the fool?

THIRD VOICE

Oh, Samson, does that hurt him, hey?

THE POPULACE

Vive la terreur! And death to each lord!

[*Again the curtain swiftly covers the entire scene, together with the street mob, which has been on the first stage. The orchestra now lies dark and silent.* PHILISTIADES *alone is visible before the starry curtain.*

PHILISTIADES

This happened in Paris, Place de la Concorde,
On the twenty-third of Januaree
Seventeen hundred and ninety-three
Years after Jesus was crucified.
These also died as the martyrs died.
For victims fall as the passions wax,
And freedom was theirs through the hangman's axe.
The monarch became an underling,
But once again he was the King,
When he, with vigorous hero tread,
Gave up his head, on the block was dead.
Just this much more I'd like to mention:
We took no harm from this past dissension,
Nor I nor the other gentleman here.
We hope you'll find this reassuring:
We shall not change our plans, no fear,
For the slight harm we've been enduring
From rowdies a trifle discourteous:
What of it? They don't worry us.
They'll all return, ere very long,
Back to the spot where they belong;
That's something we've often seen before.
The spirit that over all doth soar,
Controls after all the stage completely
And the Director, smiling discreetly,
Quietly sits behind his wall,
And the governing threads, he holds them all.

[*The curtain opens, and* PYTHIA *is seen in a mystic light, a wreath of bays on her head, the prophet's staff in her hand.*

PYTHIA

O Europe, ever subject to the Christian god,
With night o'erspread since fled the gods of ancient Greece,
Into thy destiny's abyss I gaze far down
And, looking far ahead, I see thy future path.
Oft hast thou trembled, now thou tremblest once again
In blood and pain, like to a woman travailing sore,
For still as yet the longed-for child has not been born
That thou didst deem was born two thousand years agone.
O Europe, thou still pregnant with the seed of Zeus,
The steer that bore thee far and far through ocean waves,
Thou homeless one, that like poor Io tossed about
By Hera's vengeance cannot ever come to rest.
Insensate roaring ragest thou, thy mouth a froth,
Veiled in a cloud of swarming, stinging, swarthy flies
That thrust in tireless eager toil, as thick as dust,
Their poisonous stings by day and night into thy flanks.
And when betimes thou, deathly faint and sweat-bedecked,
Collapsest, heeding thy tormentors frightful for the time
No more, nor feeling any more for weariness the spur
Of thousand, million thorns: there comes to thee in dreams,
In the half slumber of thy pain, a youthful god.

And ever thinkst thou then, for a brief space deceived,
The gruesome, awful time of trial o'er at last.
But not e'en now art thou delivered, and the weight
Of that great son of God, unborn, thou still must bear.
Oh, not yet born is he, is Europe's Prince of Peace,
Not the Redeemer, not though men do consecrate
Full many a shrine to him: he lies who this denies.
For were this offspring of the highest Godhead there
Where men do worship: how could strife and silent rage
And sickness further have so seared the mother's womb
And chased her, roaring pain, full tilt through stones and thorns?
Ah no, this Prince of Peace, whom all men laud, he has
But kindled e'er the savage brand of cruel war,
Aye, and his servants did such martydoms devise
As never devil has conceived in flesh and blood.
The blackest age of Greece saw not such tortures vile.
But far away, like breaking day, the dawn of peace
I see, however much the poisonous pest to-day,
And gloomy madness, rage unchecked in Europe's blood.

[*While the prophetess has been speaking, the orchestra has gradually become more and more animated. As the light increases there arises among the populace a hum, a murmur, the sound of many*

voices, and finally a roar out of which is heard a universal cry. To the sound of the Marseillaise severed heads are carried about on pikes. The DRUMMER DEATH *leads the procession.*

THE POPULACE

Vive la république! Vive la liberté!

FIRST JACOBIN

Freedom's wedding-bells are ringing to-day.
The down-trodden folk and liberty
Are wedding this day in blood and glee.
There on those pikes is a noble crowd
Of witnesses — how the proud heads are bowed!
Great harlots, princes, and lords, they ride
Proudly on high, yet are far from pride.

FIRST WOMAN

[*Screams up at the prophetess*
Hey, scare-crow, with your head in the air!
What are you doing? Get out of there!

SECOND WOMAN

To scratch your face off would please me most.

VOICES

Hang her up to the nearest post!

FIRST WOMAN

Down with her, take her before the Committee.
Suspicious she looks. Down without pity.
She's an aristocrat, she's a vampire.

Voices

Down with her, spear her into the mire.

The Prophetess

Lay not your hands upon the sacred prophetess,
Inspired of Phœbus, from whose eyes no thing is hid.
Ye froth in blindness, like a frog-spawn in a pond,
But I can see, can see you and your better good.
Freedom? Equality? — Aye, down yonder in the tomb!
Fraternity? — Say "brother" to the gnawing worms
That wait with greed upon your ugly carcasses.
In this great day, ye are but dung upon the fields.

[*A handsome, twelve-year-old boy leaps from behind the curtain upon the first stage, where he begins, in perfect innocence, to play with a top which he impels with a small whip.*

Pythia

Look here! Know ye the lad? — But nay, ye know him not —
That gayly spins his top with blow of snapping whip?
Know ye the top he spins?— But nay, ye know it not —
'Twas baked of dust, your blood-soaked dust, and it is called
The World. To-morrow's world, but not the world to-day.

[*The mob climbs the steps to the first stage, amused and curious; at length the people burst out laughing.*

VOICES

Come, look at the boy! And look once more!
Fair as an angel and French to the core.

THE BOY

Oh, pshaw, I'm not French, I'm from Corsica,
Your France is only my step-mamma.

A WOMAN

A devilish lad, courageous, I vow.

A SEPTEMBRIST

What would you say, if I killed you now?

THE BOY

'Twould be just like you, you big clodhopper;
You're as bold as France: no baby can stop her.
You're as lying too, in every line.
I am a Corsican, you are a swine.
[*Thunders of laughter from the mob.*

VOICES

He gave him his dose, that's plain to see.

THE SEPTEMBRIST

That's courage, that's courage! He's safe from me.
But why call *la France* a coward and liar?

THE BOY

La France is simply a lazy quagmire.
We Corsicans have but a foot of land,
But slavery's something we will not stand.
You threw the fire-brand into our homes,

And now the time for our vengeance comes.
Your feet upon our necks you plant,
But break my hold on your throats you can't;
I'll drill you, conquer you and quell you,
You shall dance the steps that I will tell you!
Blood you shall swill to your heart's content:
But to get it your own breasts shall be rent.

THE POPULACE

[*Bursts out.*

L'Empereur! L'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur!

VOICES

The boy understands the proper tone.
He'll carry out the Revolution.
Up with him! Set him upon the throne!

[*The* BOY *is carried off in triumph with a "Vive l'Empereur!" through the orchestra, on which darkness descends. Before the first curtain, now closed again, the spot-light falls on* PHILISTIADES.

PHILISTIADES

You're startled, it's more than you can stomach.
The whole event is really comic.
So to speak, it's genius's lightning stroke,
A kind of cosmic historical joke.
Around a boy the rabble swirled:
They lift him on high, an imperial strutter;
'Tis a Shrovetide masque from the dregs of the gutter,
An imperial farce, for all the world.
You know what idea they hooted down,
Why, a dog or a cat might have cabbaged the crown.

But this hooting brought them no end of trouble.
They painted the devil on the wall,
And later he actually came at their call.
And then he made their burdens double.
For you see this lad was not really an ox,
But a genius for rule and as sly as a fox.
They'll find it out when they come to stare
At the canister-shot of the *Vendémiaire*,
Which will take off their heads with a neat incision,
And prove that the lad had a genuine mission.
E'en while I speak, the decision is taken:
To-morrow an Emperor new will awaken.
The Pope will anoint him — a sorry task —
With St. Remigius' holy flask.
No matter: his sanction they did not ask.
But since the boy would not go to Rome,
To Notre Dame must his Holiness come,
And so the bay-crowned young dictator
Was duly installed as Imperator.
Charlemagne from his ancient tomb
Lent the insignia handed down
To bless his successors that wear the crown.
He even sent him his Frankish sword,
And honor and precepts was pleased to accord.
So the Franks' new ruler was deeply imbued
With the old imperial attitude:
Its aims were embracing, grand, amazing.
But on the Impossible closely grazing.
But now I had better go my ways.
Our piece now enters a different phase.

[*The orchestra, which is again lighted up, shows a new scene. The Parisian mob has vanished. In its stead a Carnival*

procession has entered. Buffoons draw a float on which an enormous dummy sits enthroned: a ridiculously attired straw-man, supposed to represent the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in full regalia, with sceptre and imperial globe. On the front of the float crouches a gigantic, sadly ruffled eagle, one of whose talons is fettered with ring and chain. About the float moves a crowd of laughing masqueraders, some with crowns, some with bishop's mitres, others in cap and gown, with monstrous ink-wells and goose-quills. A special group is formed by a number of bird-masks. At the head of the procession strides a herald who carries on a cushion the symbol of imperial and judicial power, the "secular sword." Behind the wagon walk the holders of hereditary offices, such as Lord High Steward, Cupbearer, *and so on. On the float beside the straw-man stands a grizzled* Knight.

The Knight

Be off! nor treat with indignity
His imperial Roman Majesty,
Or I'll take a dozen of you by your habits,
You brawlers, and choke you like so many rabbits.
[*The crowd replies with mocking laughter.*

First Crowned Head

We know about that, you knock-kneed knight,
That wooden blade is a terrible sight!

SECOND CROWNED HEAD

And he can't even lift this trifling bauble,
For he can't move himself, and that's the trouble.
The Paladin is as stiff as a post,
And all he can do is to fume and boast.

THE KNIGHT

Not so fast, my old crown-wearing son.
Here sits the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.
What's your complaint? What's his Majesty done?

FIRST BIRD

'Tis Shrovetide, sir, and we're going to masque it
With Charlemagne's spectre, since you ask it,
Praise the old rag-bag with shout and Te Deum,
Mouldered and worm-eaten down in its casket,
Ere we deposit it in the museum.

THE KNIGHT

If your wings aren't clipped, away you go flying,
When you open your bills, it's only for lying.
This crown is no fool's cap, to clink as I caper,
This sceptre and sword are not fashioned of paper,
When the Emperor stirs, all the land's in commotion
From the German sea to the Mediterranean.
The ruling will is the one in his cranium,
And that is the law from ocean to ocean.
Deny your lord, and you're then a denier
Of the flourishing, hallow'd, Roman Empire.

[*He kicks out toward the eagle, who in some strange wise coughs up something out of his throat.*

Be quiet there, you lousy fool!

SOME MASQUERADERS

[*Confusedly.*

What is't?

FIRST BIRD

He's disgusted and coughing up wool.

SECOND BIRD

Nay, what he spews is blood and gall.

ALL

[*Except the Birds, confusedly.*

Let's settle his hash for good and all.

[*The eagle is trodden by the* KNIGHT, *spattered with ink by the* JURISTS, *while the* CROWN-WEARERS *pull out wing and tail-feathers. The* BUFFOONS *strike him with their wooden swords. The* BISHOPS *poke him with their crooks and singe him with lighted candles. He hops very pitifully back and forth. The* BIRDS *burst out in shrieks of anguish.*

THE EAGLE

Treason, treason! Accursèd fate!
I've become a mock'ry and scorn in the state.
They want to see limping my loyalty staunch,
Hard pressed by many a priestly paunch,
Plucked bare by princes and counselors,
Made soup for th' imperial chancellors.

And he that sits yonder, a Carnival puppet,
With lifeless fingers, the childish wight,
Powerless either to cure or to stop it,
Cannot restore my old, free flight.
Hardly I scaped from the Roman cages,
But this golden freedom my spirit cheers,
Spite of those terrible Thirty Years.
But if once more my talon engages —
For I am that noble bird, the Phœnix —
The demon who almost my life had ended,
I'll rend him (I'm none of your weak anæmics).
But till God has sent the redeemer splendid,
The German nation they'll try to kill;
But try as they will, 'twill oppose them still.
My ailments came through Inheritance Portal,
Yet I am an eagle, and I am immortal.

[*On the opposite side, in front, a closed sedan-chair is carried in. Bearers and escorts in costumes of the eighteenth century. When the small procession has reached the train of masqueraders, the door of the chair opens,* "Old Fritz" *steps out, and frees the eagle from its tormentors, laying about him with his stick.*

Frederick

Parbleu, Messieurs! Parbleu, Messieurs!
Does you still take pleasure in sooch caresses?
I vas, you see, in de *Champs Élysées,*
And I almost forget de Cherman distresses.
Cet aigle ici in de Roman Carnival?
Quelle infamie! quel grand scandale!
Dese tings make my anger verree beeg,
'Ave you den not any new Smalkaldic Ligue?

As body-guard for zis *oiseau céleste?*
Leave 'im in peaces! Hell and pest!

[*The tormentors have retired. The* KING *re-enters his sedan-chair. All the* BIRDS *surround it with noisy clamor.*

CHORUS OF BIRDS

Hip, hurrah, the monarch mighty!
Go not from us, tarry by us.
Free the eagle, king most pious:
Countless voices thus incite thee.
To the threshold of God's dwelling
Hear our voices upward swelling.

[*The song ceases abruptly. The* KING *descends from his chair again and thumps on the ground with his cane.*

FREDERICK

None begins at the beginning
Who has had a thorough inning.
What comes now, that is your *chose,*
I've my duty done, God knows.
Did I not my country guide
Unto self-esteem and pride?
Taught them how their souls might leap
From their vegetable sleep?
How to act, lest cope and cowl
Turn them into beast or fowl?
How with unsheathed sword to brave
Those whom conscience had made slave?
But for my awak'ning breath
In Germany —

[*He touches the eagle with his stick.*
he were in death!

Roman priests their hands had toasted

While upon a spit he roasted.
And your patriotic ditty,
Stead of singing to your king:
Miserere, Lord have pity!
Or you'd have no voice to sing.

[*The* KING *disappears in the chair. The straw-man lifts his arm and his hand lets a great parchment scroll fall. A* JURIST *picks it up and steps to the door of the sedan-chair.*

THE JURIST

[*Addressing* FREDERICK *inside the chair.*
My name is Doctor April, Sire.
Hark to my sayings one and all.
You've felt the excommunicating fire,
But the lord of the Roman Carnival
Has also put you under the ban,
Because you have not yet felt the curb,
To last till you've changed your mind, my man,
And our pleasure no longer will disturb.

["OLD FRITZ" *again leaps out of the sedan-chair.*

FREDERICK

Monsieur, 'e weesh a lettle treat.
Bon!

[*He slaps the* JURIST's *face.*

Dere's my *pour le mérite!*

[*Turning and taking a large parchment scroll from the chair.*

But to you, ye sons of an eagle's brood,
Here's another parchment for your German blood.
Be pleased to stand up in martial array.
And hark to the German Phœnix his song,

Writ by my royal fingers strong
During my rest in the Champs Élysées.

[*He vanishes in the sedan-chair, which is rapidly carried off. The* Birds *gather, shrieking, about the parchment, and begin to read, or rather sing it, in chorus.*

The Birds

Truly now no child of fortune,
Poor, plucked eagle, you at last
Shall be Phœnix, past be past.
Even while the pyres are piling
To consume the old reviling.
Parsons, Princes beyond counting
Set the pitch and sulphur mounting,
Pluck your feathers, almost flay you;
One might think they fain would slay you.
All these — who could name their names? —
Thrust and cast you in the flames.
Once so strongly you could vanquish,
Now in childish weakness languish.
Conqueror of boundless spaces,
Chains and bells to-day you're wearing,
Calling jeers from empty faces,
In your bird-cage mock'ry bearing.
Yet howe'er you helpless hop,
Making giant fans to flop,
Sadly crawling, bound and fettered,
Soon your status shall be bettered.
Once again when you have moulted
Through the clouds you will have bolted,
And on mighty pinions soaring
Space and time you'll go exploring.
Bare and scabbed, today, O sorrow!
Glad and facing the sun tomorrow.

See his eyes, so nearly blind:
Far away, with eyes of mind,
He can see the dawn-light quicken.
Darkness here his sight had stricken.

[*The procession, after a brief delay, proceeds again. Suddenly the* DRUMMER DEATH *appears before the curtain on the edge of the first stage. The voices of the masqueraders and the roll of the drum mingle inextricably. Then the curtains of the first and second stage open, and the* EMPEROR NAPOLEON, *with* TALLEYRAND *beside him, is seen together with his* MARSHALS. *The* EMPEROR *takes a field-glass from his eyes.*

NAPOLEON

Why do these fowl make such a racket?

TALLEYRAND

I did not catch the words from afar.

NAPOLEON

I know what Cossacks and Pandours are,
But I never saw such a feather-jacket.
They are not Jews, not Mohammedans,
Not Mamelukes, not Bedouins.
What's their tribe, and where is their native cranny?
I don't know, they look to me uncanny.

TALLEYRAND

To me as well 'tis a crowd suspicious;
I know not where are their haunts pernicious.
I take them for phantoms visionary.

That plucked one is the master-canary.
They're maggots, unbidden kernel-pickers,
Airy romantics, regular stickers.
Here in the land of poets and thinkers
There live, they say, a lot of such stinkers,
Folks without or field or stubbles,
Their bird-brains filled with smoke and bubbles,
Separatists, neuter genders,
Ne'er-do-wells and time-expenders.
Uncertain, hard to seize and feel,
They form the danger of the Ideal.
I fancy the big ones we'll easily settle,
But each of these small fry's a stinging nettle.
The farmer and citizen soon will obey us,
But sparrows and storks will continue to slay us.
Kings, civilians, and even the priests,
But not these awful idealists.
How shall we manage to tie their fists?
Some one could pluck and roast, like plover,
But that is a thing they'd soon get over.
The others will mock our prohibitions
With their vapid patriot-exhibitions.
They'll swarm all over, they'll raise a clamor
In North and South with the patriot's hammer;
They'll peep and chirp in the East and West
The ideologist's litany:
That there's but one single Germany,
Without boundary-lines or the tariff test.

NAPOLEON

The idea is good: but the questions arise
Who has it, with whom its fulfilment lies.
I'm the man for the job, I realize.
I too am a kind of kernel-biter,

A kind of boundary-dynamiter,
Not like those, a simple guano-dropper!
But at all events also a pinion-flopper,
Who flies to the sun without coming a cropper.
To be sure at the time a good practician,
And most of all a fine tactician.

TALLEYRAND

I wonder if your Majesty saw
That imperial effigy made of straw,
And the group on the float that's rolling there?

NAPOLEON

For imperial farces I do not care.

TALLEYRAND

Too bad! I was just about to state:
You might overthrow this potentate
And seat yourself in the idol's stead.
The Carnival would then be dead,
And many a consequence might follow.

NAPOLEON

The notion is not entirely hollow.
The straw-man's appearance is not æsthetic,
But he seems to be sacred. If not splenetic,
For personal ends one might employ him,
Or contrariwise one might destroy him.
Superstition, servility conquer the masses.
So if inside of the Moloch we crawl,
Or clutch him and throw him, head and all,
We can easily free them, the stupid asses.
The helpless ones one readily gathers
Round any new gods, with a few bell-wethers.

TALLEYRAND

Good, good, your Majesty grasps, I see,
The whole of this sanctified mummery.
You have there a straw-man for an opponent,
A Cæsar of straw: you can give him fits,
After settling real fighters at Austerlitz.
To be sure he too is no great exponent
Of war, yet don't underestimate him,
But go through the moves, and then checkmate him.
The world still rings with the Three-Emp'ror-Fight.
'Tis well if the folk again laugh with delight.
And now by good luck unexpected meeting,
We've suddenly this Two-Emperor-Greeting.
The youngest of all, and of all the oldest,
The most disfigured, the most perfect and boldest!

NAPOLEON

I command that the idol be pelted with stones,
Then my grenadiers can pick up the bones.

[*The dummy is stoned and torn to pieces. French grenadiers clear the orchestra.*

NAPOLEON

I have an idea, by the way.
The imperial mummy is happily finished.
Divide imperabis! Don't carry the rags away.
Pick up th' insignia, they must not be diminished,
The globe and the sceptre, *tutti quanti!*
For as for the Carnival, *sempre avanti!*
Why shouldn't this trash be hung up in the Louvre?
I'll have it then, whatever befall,

Especially if I restore the Capitol,
And myself in addition Augustus call.
For that however some work is needed.
And the wise man says: time cannot be speeded.
All Europe I'll turn into martial camps.
Dies iræ: I'll get them down, the scamps!
These arrogant, filibustering traders
Shall whine at my heel, the isle-dwelling raiders;
I'll cleanse the seas of these pestilent pirates,
These Anglo-Saxon, sea-going sly rats,
Though the rivers of blood make me put on my waders.
Their money-bags buy those that give me battle:
I'll stick themselves into bags, like cattle,
And deep in the English channel sink them,
For a thousand years they can sit and bethink them
How they have failed, and be all the wiser —
As at Austerlitz yesterday Tsar and Kaiser.

[*In the meantime a distinguished company of Germans, in street clothes, have entered and occupied the orchestra. Now the curtain of the second stage closes, concealing* Napoleon *and his generals.* Hegel, *the German philosopher, appears on the first stage.*

Hegel

You saw this man: never mind his cognomen.
I call him the Earth-Spirit — *absit omen!*
The soul of the world is enshrined in his breast,
The goddess of Reason made manifest.
I speak these words with firm conviction,
With a proudly humble nuchal constriction:
My philosophy of history
This man has turned into prophecy!

There stood the embodied concept of the state,
And the Mind that gave it real existence.

[GYMNAST JAHN *climbs the steps to the first stage.*

GYMNAST JAHN

He heard the grass-blades grow, that's straight!
And how? His ears extend such a distance.

FIRST CITIZEN

[*From the crowd.*

You stow your gab, you ruffian low!
Don't insult our Hegel, the glorious sage.
Whatever he teaches is bound to be so.

GYMNAST JAHN

He's a maker of phrases on page after page.

FIRST CITIZEN

But you are a boor, and a regular one.

GYMNAST JAHN

You're right: for I am Gymnast Jahn.
Strictly boorish and strictly Teutonic —
My words, I assure you, are not ironic.
This lad with his factory-made idee
Would only make a breakfast for me.
But I'd need a good portion of rye-bread and ham
And Rhine wine: for that's the kind I am.
Say, where does he live? I suppose it's in regions
Where the blessed spirits dwell by the legions;
For he never could worship the heel that has trodden
His land, by heaven, if his soul were not sodden.

I call upon devils three thousand and seven
To keep me from out this Hegelian heaven.
Before such a Hegel my soul shall inveigle,
I'll venture my luck with the hawk and the eagle,
Consign myself fully with hide and hair
To the German eagle, the king of the air.
And though it may be somewhat premature,
I'll sing you the Phœnix-song, simon-pure.

A Cryptic Non-Gentleman

We know the song! We have heard the tone;
It's directed against both altar and throne.

Gymnast Jahn

[*Calls back.*

Pull his lid off on the spot,
And you'll find a spot where the hair is not.
Take heed, his secret society
Has ominous plans for Germany.

A Cryptic Non-Gentleman

Look out for lies, spite of German foggery.
I smell, I smell some demagogery.

Gymnast Jahn

Oh, pshaw, don't think I feel molested.
We have a deliverer well attested.
Of course the child is tiny yet,
All Germany's nursing it, dry and wet.
The child is called: the German idea.

Second Citizen

A bastard that's none of my flesh, that's clear.

GYMNAST JAHN

When the child is a man, the idea an act,
Then the new German national state is a fact.

THIRD CITIZEN

Merci! We'll leave that salad intact.

[BARON VON STEIN *also climbs the steps to the first stage, and places himself beside* JAHN.

BARON VON STEIN

A salad today, and that's no jest,
Is our land, the land of tribes Germanic.
'Tis a meal the nation can hardly digest,
In special certain coxcombs Romanic.
Devil take those cooks that flour us,
That carve us and rend us at will in our meekness,
Letting outsiders more quickly devour us,
Grinding us up, in our national weakness.
Devil take the several valets
Who offer us to the two principal palates
On Russian bread or on Gallic toast:
For they are the pair can digest the most.
They'll swallow us down like a little sparrow,
As the Briton's world-plum-pudding enters his marrow.
Think if your France were so fricasseed,
Or England so carved that its arteries bleed;
A beautiful statue so shattered and broken,
Each stone-cutter takes home his piece as a token.
If Germany is to withstand her foes,
Indivisible lines must their weapons oppose.

THE COSMOPOLITE

How strange! such things I never could feel.
Sooner I'd hold an un-German ideal
Than the diadem shift, with its jewels particular,
On our country's blond head, from the perpendicular.
I love the gay-colored rich radiation,
Each jewel denoting a princely station.
Each jewel of courtly splendor the soul,
And more by itself than a whole as a whole.

GNEISENAU

And though the piece be ne'er so delicious,
Though the façade be ne'er so auspicious,
Without some statics, without foundation,
The whole remains a tarararation.
[*He puts his hand on* BARON VON STEIN'S *shoulder.*
Here stands our imperial architect,
Baron von Stein, his title in winning:
Give him his workmen and give him respect,
This very day he will make a beginning.
And as foundation and corner-stone
Stein * alone his place will own.
For alas we've but a single Stein;
We'd have thousands more, if the say were mine.
And if I knew of another Stein-quarry,
I'd dig them myself, nor further worry.
O German House, how noble your lines
If built entire of similar Steins!
You'd be so firm and roomy and bright,
An architectural dream of delight;
Chambers light, and festive the whole:

* Stein means *stone.*

A sound, strong, cheery body for the strong,
cheery national soul.

THIRD CITIZEN

Pitch out the Austrian, bones and brisket:
What's he got to say? I'd certainly risk it.

GYMNAST JAHN

The truth! 'Tis the genuine German's part
To make his start with the German heart.
It hangs in you now as heavy as lead,
That's why your cry is so empty and dead.

A CRYPTIC NON-GENTLEMAN

This unity racket's a stale old ditty.
The princes will give you a loud haw haw! —
And the imperial baron from old Nassau
They'll soon string up from the gates of a city.
This wonderful grand united state
Which, bluntly, the heretics dominate,
Is a lovely thing for the kings to belabor:
I can hear each one of them whetting his sabre.

BARON VON STEIN

Why, then we shall build with sword and trowel
Like the favored pair the she-wolf nourished,
Begotten of Mars, that so splendidly flourished.

THE CRYPTIC NON-GENTLEMAN

Oh, yes, with the Devil's imps to howl.

BARON VON STEIN

But why should not their Royal Graces
Pull with us at the self-same traces?
Why should they turn from us their faces?

There's none that is born to a lofty stand
But higher yet is his Fatherland.
Save that he love it better than life,
Such nobility cannot compare to
His that will render his life in the strife
For the land that his hand did allegiance swear to.
The humblest toiler who does that thing
Is the truly noble, the duke and the king.

FOURTH CITIZEN

Haha! This fellow calls him a German!
And what does he give us? A Jacobin sermon!
Deuce take you, discord — and trouble-producers,
Babbling idealists, folk-seducers!

SECOND CITIZEN

A national state? That's for others to stew in.
Or should we then bring the divine order to ruin?
The unassailable, inviolable order?
Such attempts on folly or roguery border.

SCHARNHORST

[*Has taken a stand beside* STEIN *and* JAHN.

Though you may scoff and laugh and jeer,
The German idea's no mockery here.
Here in our kitchen alchemistic
We're making a spirit Germanistic.
Our foundries have managed, as first creation,
The elementary patriot of the German nation,
Who at least as much national pride possesses
As any good Briton's or Frenchman's eye expresses.
Moreover we've now a different object,
To take the so-called narrow-minded subject

And melt him, cleanse him, and then refound him:
Let him stand on his own two feet, confound him!
With citizens, farmers, and workmen around him.
Instead of trying to blight them and slight them,
We take their back-bones and try to right them;
Instead of trying to knave and enslave them,
We teach them to walk upright, to save them.
We're going to succeed, is my confident feeling,
In making the German standpoint appealing,
Then heroes will spring up like trees of the forest,
Not women — excuse me! that point is the sorest.
We'll have warriors then like the sands of the sea,
A reserve of invincible infantry.
Unlashed, unquelled, and uncompelled,
By a terrible, holy sense of duty impelled,
None will fear to lay down his precious life
For Germany's greatness, in battle-strife.—
Already our smiths their skill have shown
On a new German people's imperial throne;
Though we'd like to see, where the Kaiser sits,
Reincarnated our own "old Fritz."
Of commanding slaves he had grown so tired:
Free men we could offer his rule inspired.
Of course we still seek the man of the hour,
To show the way to Germany's power,
To dominate house and palace and steeple,
And lead into freedom the German people.

First Citizen

Freedom! Aye, that's the proper bait.
We know all right where you got your drugs.
Parisian physic is out of date.
The best thing would be to fill you with slugs.
They ought to be in a dungeon-cell.
Now we only need Schiller with William Tell,

Whose arrow unseen Gessler's beauty spiles
And magisterial blood defoils,
While Fate in the end on the scoundrel smoils.*

[Heinrich von Kleist *takes his stand beside* Stein, Jahn, *and* Scharnhorst.

Heinrich von Kleist

Who speaks of the arrow from Tell enticed,
Has hit upon my deepest reflection,
My secret-gloomy thought-complexion.
I am the poet Heinrich von Kleist.
The deed of Tell, and Gessler's death,
Would end in the end this torturing death.
By birth I'm a Prussian war-aristocrat.
Our king's a Cunctator: give me deeds, *verbum sat.*
I did write a play, "Arminius's Fight."
'Twas a deed; but all that I did was to write.
Now that's not enough to keep me contented;
My temples glow, my pulse is demented.
I lie in a burning bed, and shiver
As voices awake me: deliver, deliver!
Deliver us from the tyrannizer,
The pitiless, world- and man-despiser.
But no resistance I command,
Except the dagger in my hand.
My day would 'gin to dawn,
Were by this knife the Corsican gone.

First Citizen

To prison with fools and visionaries,
Malcontents, dang'rous tumultuaries!
First poetasters, then assassinators!
First sniv'lers and sleepers, and then high traitors!

* Hauptmann rhymes *erscheusst: vergeusst: priest* as a take-off on Schiller's dialect rhymes.

GYMNAST JAHN

For all we care, you may choke in your delusion:
But we will conspire to our enemies' confusion.

[JAHN, SCHARNHORST, STEIN, GNEISENAU, *and* KLEIST *raise their hands for the oath.*

VOICES

[*From the orchestra.*

A Rütli oath, a Schilleresque poesy!
A highly ominous fantasy.

[JOHN BULL *with a bag of gold steps from behind the curtain on to the stage;* JAHN, SCHARNHORST, STEIN, GNEISENAU, *and* KLEIST *leave it.*

JOHN BULL

Hi sez there ain't enough tin in the gyme.
'Ere's plenty o' pounds as I've gone an' brought.
Cos wy? Ye see, I simply thought
My gold 'ud myke your courage flyme,
An' fighters, thinks I, they can be bought.
But more o' that another time.
Now the Little Corporal's plyguin' you?
Pst! Sh! Don't myke too much of a stew,
Or 'e'll cop us an' myke us a sizzlin' brew.
Wot we've got to do is to block up 'is wy.
You Proosians are a fine lot o' 'eroes, I sy!
You've got brave monarchs, and many a square 'un,
Augustus the Strong — now he was a rare 'un.
They all found out, long, long ago,
That the Britisher's pounds myke the German mare go.
But *Hi* am a merchant — no wish to offend ye —

Hi don't myke no gifts, but I've got lots to lend ye.
We Britishers know 'ow to pick up a colony.
You poor, frozen mice, leave your sand-box an' follo' me.
Them critters in the Louver, they still 'ave their jokes
'Bout your poor old king as "the king o' poor folks."
The cove as wants to live in this bloomin' creytion
'E's got to 'ave money, wotever 'is nytion.
An' the boy with a good bit o' beef in 'is belly,
'E knows 'ow to 'and out the w'acks, now I tell ye.
But if 'e don't get lots o' grub for to swaller,
'Is w'ines is loud an' 'is stummick is 'oller.
Now I'll spit on me 'ands — look out, you ninnies! —
An' tyke a good look at me golden guineas.

THE COSMOPOLITE

[*Has climbed lazily out of the orchestra and taps* JOHN BULL *on the shoulder.*

Quite humbly I'd like to ask information,
Should like to find out — unless it is treason —
Why your Mightiness shows such great indignation?
Is your conscience not clear? Or for some other reason?
Have you stumbled on something unforeseeable,
Or what else has transpired that you find disageeable?

JOHN BULL

Oh, it's on'y the Frenchy. You know 'ow they are.

We gyve 'em a lickin' at Trafalgar:
They lost the battle to Hadmiral Nelson,
An' they lost lots o' ships — hull, miggin', and keelson.
But that emp'ror, Boney is 'is nyme,
'E 'as the opinion, jus' the syme,
'E don't like salutin' the Union Jack;
But we myde 'im run an' we're 'ard on 'is track.
Hi 'ates that there bloody Napoleon,
Cos 'e's the worst enemy of Albion,
An' a deadly fighter 'gen Frederick's realum,
We'll both on us 'ate 'im, but Hi'll keep the 'ellum,
For w'ether I looks to the starboard or leeward,
Hover the hocean old Hengland's the steward
For ever; the Proosians can 'ave the land.
That's a bargain, old fellows, so give us your 'and.
Now 'ere's the tin, let's open the gyme
An' send the scamp flyin' right back w'ere 'e cyme.

FIRST VOICE

[*From the orchestra.*

Now wot's the bloke talkin' about all the time?
We're neutral, we're neutral; we're not in the gyme!

SECOND VOICE

[*From the orchestra.*

What does he want? We won't bite at his bait!
Document writing's my permanent fate.
What do we care if Britons are killed,
So long as our own recruits are drilled?

THIRD VOICE

You may scuffle out yonder and fight your fill,
As long as every Prussian has his pipe and his spill.

JOHN BULL

Ho, 'baccy an pipes is all right in their plyce,
But Hi fail to see wy you want 'em now in your fyce,
An' wy you don't tyke them famous troops you drill
To cop that dam Europeen bird Roc, an' kill
That bird, wot's been tearin' up the 'ole German map —
Course it's Boney I mean, 'e's th' hidentical chap —
An' dark'nin' the sky both near an' far.
Hi though you was Prooshans — dunno wot y'are.

FIRST VOICE

Germans? — bosh! That's our position.
Let others make advances, for we're Frederician.
The deuce! What's the use of our Frederick's troops,
If we've got to do washing for all the nincompoops.
We've peace here, and comfort — both in a true sense,
Your "Germany" 's nothing to us but a nuisance.

THE COSMOPOLITE

Your most obedient servant, my son:
You were talking of Emp'ror Napoleon.
Your joy in War-heroes is not symptomatic.

Now I am by no means democratic,
Yet a person with half and eye can see
This Homme-Peuple surely a genius must be.
That is, myself am no *bête allemande,*
But I represent cult-yuh in ouah lahnd,
And, *avec permission,* a deed I salute
Which cost us our Aix, and Mayence to boot.
Mayence, and Aix, and Trèves, and Cologne!
Hear the butcher and baker and chandler groan!
Je vous demande pardon, Monsieur.
The French have taken one bank of the Rhine.
Bon! We'll simply say *adieu.*
As if it were no relation of mine.
And besides: I'm terribly fond of Voltaire,
So theocracy is a subject for laughter
Or horror. The mitres went up in the air,
And hundreds of crooks came hurtling after.
That's once when the Critic of Reason Pure
Played the joker — those bats thought their trick was secure!

JOHN BULL

Hi never could tell wot this rigmarole's about.
All I know is count gold an' for old Hengland shout.
So I arsks you again for the one last time . . . ?

VOICES

[*From the orchestra.*

We're neutra., we're neutral, we're not in the gyme!

[JOHN BULL *disappears behind the curtain with his money-bag. A* WAR-FURY *dashes through the crowd swinging two burning torches. She storms up the*

steps to the first stage, while at the same time the muffled thunder of guns is heard.

THE FURY

War! War! Ye have been slumb'ring.
The nations' guns are thund'ring.
Ye wake too late, the troops are met,
Your eagles sink at Jena and Auerstädt.
Your general in the mire doth stick,
They call him Duke of Brunswick.
Your officers are runaways, braggart noddies,
Your generals sulky, conceited busybodies.
Marshal Lannes put his heavy hand
On your radiant Louis Ferdinand.
To never a foe would his sword be tendered:
For Prussia his hero-life was surrendered.
Hear ye the boom of the battle-song
And the dread *en avant!* of Napoleon?
See ye the fire-spewing terror
And prone Prussian corpses paying for error?
Hear ye the Reaper? He mows, he mows!
And the Gallic cock, as he murder crows?
Marmont, Davoust, as they come up like thunder
And smash your squadrons all asunder?
That's the language the Corsican knows:
A language of blood, a vengeance of blood,
He's covering Prussia with a bloody flood.
Hurrah, Murat and Bernadotte!
Blood wells or here or there, impartial,
Under each step of a Gallic marshal.
Pray, pray to your God, and tarry not.
Too late ye awake, too late, I repeat.
Hear the whimper and wail: Retreat, retreat.
'Tis the retreat of the good old days
Which fiery riders are trampling apace,

The retreat of the peace-devoted
Before the new life, the hundred-throated.
The retreat of the darkness-enshrouded
From reason's light, which scorn has beclouded.
War! War! I announce Prussia's last death-song!
Ye have slept too long, ye have slept too long!

[*The* Fury *disappears behind the curtain, shrieking.*

The Cosmopolite

What's this scolding about Jena and Auerstädt?
Tant de bruit pour une omelette.

[*He descends leisurely to the orchestra, his hands behind his back.*

The Public

[*In a confused murmur.*

What's Jena to us, or Auerstädt?
Tant de bruit pour une omelette.

[*The room grows dark; the illuminated figure of* Philistiades *stands at the footlights.*

Philistiades

You've clearly forgotten my humble sector.
Meanwhile I've been helping the director
While this vast historic setting we guided;
Twixt a thousand things my mind was divided.
Just now a state has kicked the bucket.
Of course a high decree had struck it.
Then too the unfortunate country perished
Of the narrow views its citizens cherished.
For they seized, like a sickness pestilential,
At last on the classes most influential,

Yet all of them felt like the real "old Fritz"—
Which for once revealed in them healthy wits.
For our laughter we surely can hardly swallow,
When a night-watch takes him to be an Apollo.
In short, night covered the Prussian throne,
Where the Reformation's success was grown;
That was and is its sacred mission.
And John Bull's gold, their troops to commission,
They needn't have thought such a queer exhibition.
For Prussian hand and English hand
Might clasp, since each was a Protestant land.
Aye, that's the healthy duality
Of a healthy freedom of spirituality!
As to these facts, if they ever forget 'em,
The devilish Satan will get 'em;
For breakfast he'll eat them gobble, gobble,
And religious freedom to the background will hobble.
Do any applaud the Revolution?
Here is more: the lasting religious solution.
These peoples each other a hand should lend
And the sacredest rights of mankind defend.
Ye Prussians, or people or kings, recall
The striking word old Sallust let fall:
From that do not swerve the slightest distance
To which you owe greatness, even existence.

FIRST CITIZEN

Je n'y comprends rien. Rien du tout.

SECOND CITIZEN

A cow at the barn-door knows more than I do.

[*Students in typical costumes are placing a lecture-desk on the first stage.*

THIRD CITIZEN

What's that they're dragging on the stage?

FOURTH CITIZEN

A pulpit or desk, I'll go bail.

THIRD CITIZEN

Nowadays talking's the rage,
And too few are put in jail.

PHILISTIADES

Hark, hark, hark!
Hark to the doctor, a learned clerk
From the chair of philosophy
At our new founded Prussian university.

FIFTH CITIZEN

Nous sommes Prussiens. Mais j'espère
Il est Français, an orator.

FIRST CITIZEN

Vient-il de Paris? Where was he before?

[JOHANN GOTTLIEB FICHTE *appears in an academic gown.*

FIRST CITIZEN

O mon dieu! A simple German bear.

PHILISTIADES

He'll lecture to you on Germanistics,
And show all Francomaniacs their true characteristics.
Hark, hark, hark to his every remark.
He's a learned light in a world of dark.

A simple weaver's son, sir,
Germany's genius was his sponsor.
Johann Gottlieb Fichte is his name.
In the history of the German spirit great is his fame.
'Ray for Fichte! Receive him with shouts of applause.
Show that you welcome his work for the cause.

FICHTE

[*At the desk.*

I am certain you've had some information
About my famous speeches to the un-German nation.
Once more I have been here besought
To give to you my well-known lecture.
We must shake off this web of alien texture,
Return to our German blood and thought.
What should be Germany's basic trait?
A German soul's independent state.
With selfishness that does not coincide.
Each German must feel his country's pride,
And the German land
Must strengthen the German's heart and hand.
In a word I'll give you the short and the long of it:
Germandom's going, you've heard the last song of it.
The miseries of a foreign sway
Consume our strength, on our marrow prey.
Pitiful folk, all poet and thinker,
Into filth and shame descended you groan,
Since the Corsican fighter, the war-blood-drinker,
Cut out your tongue and broke your backbone.
Shame is not wiped out by thinking or poetizing.

Where's the doctor to cure this shamed one for his uprising?
O blinded German tax-payer,
With goods and blood you cheerfully serve the alien slayer
Under alien flags 'gainst your motherland.
Your own rent banner lies prone on the sand,
Cold-hearted and cowardly thrown away:
That shame-blot will mark you for ever and aye.
And yet you must wash it with tears and with blood,
Hard though it be, and hurt though it should.
German folk, you must once more be clean.
I see a land strewn with dead bones on the green.
Fields full of dead men's bones I have seen,
Corruption and worms, and corpses unclean.
And it seemed that I heard the whisper of God:
Manikin, look on yonder scene,
Will these bones so mean, full of worms unclean,
Ever again alive be seen?
Said I, O master, no more, I ween.
And God said with a nod,—
Manikin, preach to these bones unclean:
You shall again alive be seen,
Shall stretch and expand,
Find flesh and skin and sinews at hand.
Blood shall be teeming,
Breath through many a lung be streaming.
And as the Lord myself has bidden,
I preached to the bones, whom death had hidden.
Then a rustle was heard in the fields full of dead,
And then came a sprouting, a rising, a swelling,
Men as from fountains upward welling,
Women's forms from ivory bred.
As if sprung from the ground an army immense,

An ocean of people, surging and dense,
Ready to flood all banks with their ridges,
No longer restrained by dikes and bridges.—
Will it ever my privilege be,
Living again such bones to see?
To wake you down there from your leaden sleep?
Teach you apers of others
To gather like brothers and honor your mothers?
Will you take your brooms to the aliens, and sweep?
Not dull with the copper of foreign tongues
The gold that to your own speech belongs?
Not for foreign dross change your native metal,
And give better for worse, your accounts to settle?
Will you learn at last, all comprehending,
That other peoples their strength are bending
To pull up by the roots the German soul?
Will you ever seek power, and self-control?
Beat the mighty *reveille* of self-estimation
In this shameful, death-branded obscuration?

First Citizen

My worthy professor, for the provost look out.
Palm the book-man was shot: you recall it no doubt.
Emp'ror Napoleon will feel no compunctions
About putting an end, as to his, to your functions,
For talking on Germany's Humiliation.

[*A company of German* Students *rushes into the orchestra with drawn rapiers.*

First Student

[*Thrusting at the first citizen.*

Slave, slave! Take that as retaliation.

First Citizen

You puppy, you chick just out of the shell!
To talk so to reverend men, is that well?

Second Student

Philistine and piker, you rouse my derision;
On your belly to Paris, you're just a Parisian.

First Citizen

So these are our polished diamonds and rubies?
Is that what the varsities teach you, you boobies?

Third Student

[*Knocks in his top hat.*
Go back to your desk with your quill in your pawers,
You in your swell French underdrawers.

Second Citizen

I think to protest we're obligated.
If such a brood's being cultivated,
Our youth so terribly spoiled and misled —
High time that the citizen's word was said.

Fourth Student

That means: "denounce 'em wherever they're found!
Out with the clubs, hit 'em over the head!
Throw into the casemates the German hound!"

Third Citizen

I know you, your worthy father has made
A good Christian, a master who knows his trade.
'Twould be good for his son, if he should larrup
You soundly and well with his shoemaker's stirrup.

FOURTH CITIZEN

Nowadays we all aspire,
And hence these scamps that rouse my ire:
Scoundrels, immoderate place-hunting gobblers,—
Stick to your last, say I to all cobblers.

FOURTH STUDENT

My last, I think, would little suit you;
I'd bend you over it first, you brute, you.
For you've much too limited a noddle.

THIRD CITIZEN

You big-mouthed, immature molly-coddle.
Take your spellers and go to your classes.

FIFTH STUDENT

Oh how I hate you, you servile asses!
Insensible, inert, sluggish masses,
Thick, slimy new wine, without fermentation,
Without or fire or clarification.
No spark can affect, no ray can go through you,
No spirit, but any kick will subdue you.

FIFTH CITIZEN

What, Fritz? You here? And you, my son?

FIFTH STUDENT

I wish we had got a bit farther on.
With spurs and sword I'd be sitting astride,
Or my blood would be dung on the country-side.

FIFTH CITIZEN

Fantastic gabble! Silly discourses!

THIRD CITIZEN

Oh, let them gallop their hobby-horses.
Give them paste-board shields and wooden sword-
lets,
False beards, paper helmets with pretty cordlets.
If the play-room pretenders make too much
noise —
Short work makes the Emp'ror of small school-
boys.
For our all-powerful *Empereur*
Is after all the best *Professeur.*

[*Old* BLÜCHER, *seventy years old, white-haired, forces his way through the students. They step back reverently, forming a lane and lowering their swords.*

BLÜCHER

Your talking certainly makes me laugh.
Parbleu! Hell and Satan! and that's not half.
All this babble I call rubbish:
Some like to croak as free men, others
In coats of masters that *I* call snobbish.
One loves gold braid and livery,
Another prefers his liberty.
One likes to eat truffles from a silver platter,
For truckling service that knows no ending,
Another on mice and rats grows fatter,
While his neck is proud, unbending.
I for example, as is well known,
Prefer to assume a Teutonic tone.
Courage for me! But cowards — I pass!
Boys, let me tell you, they . . .
And courage you find in a red-coat hussar,
Or in blouse or gown — where the stout hearts are.

You'll find it in young, you'll find it in old,
For instance, in me: my own I still hold.
But a lousy young cub, who hasn't got that,
He ought to be drowned in the Cattegat.
And so I, Gebhart Leberecht Blücher,
Prefer to your book-worm your sabring butcher.
Your worthy sires, on the other hand,
Thought books and documents much more grand.
But without my sword should I be any good?
Not worth the powder to shed my blood.
At Stargard, what should I have had to endure,
Had this pig-sticker not been sharp and sure?
For every fly that lit on the wall,
I ran him through and through, that's all,
To keep from choking with gall and rancor.
Napoleon's ship was far from my anchor.
So I massacred flies and other vermin,
Gave them names of French generals and German courtiers to squirm in,
And when a big buzzer the quiet troubled,
My venom and anger were both redoubled.
I gen'rally called him Bonyparty,
And the blows with the flat of my sword were hearty.
Yes, boys, by God, t'was a mighty spasm,
A Schilleresque enthusiasm.
In short, I've got my theme by the collar —
If 'twas only Napoleon, I'd give a dollar.
For my theme is this, and mark it well:
Let's send Napoleon straight to hell.
It's here in my heart, it's part of my breath,
And nothing can end it but victory or death.
It makes me sick, it makes me sound,
And sweating for game like a hunting-hound.

Wherever I'm standing, wherever I'm lying,
My prey before my eyes is flying.
I am no saint, no prophesier,
Yet night by night I pray with desire
That the highest God our land will waken,
And let his vengeance through me be taken.
There'll be no But nor If in that battle.
The man who has trampled on us I'll trample,
The trouble we give him he'll find quite ample.
I'll never rest till I hear his death-rattle.

First Citizen

Why is your Honor in so furious a mood?

Blücher

That, let me tell you, is bred in the blood.
If any one slaps *you* in the face,
Your pulse is not stirred from its normal pace:
Brand a sheep on the brow — for all of its pain,
Unmoved remains its stupid brain.
Harness *you* up with bridle and saddle,
You proudly waddle with servile straddle.
If from the spur *your* flanks are bloody,
Your pious prancing's a comical study.
That rider or this — all one to *you,*
And any miller's lad will do.
Any one can seize *your* halter,
If the knacker wants your hide, you never falter.
But people like me and the Baron von Stein,
We've long since ceased to be quadrupeds,
Our necks are stiff and high are our heads —
And most people's views agree with mine.
Perhaps you'll decide to be noble and teachable,
And in point of honor, like me, unimpeachable.

First Citizen

I've no objection, your Excellence.
Receive my most humble reverence.
Perhaps your Grace will be moved to content me
And to his Majesty kindly present me.
If the conqueror's once and for all *perdu,*
I'll be glad to sing your melody.
And once you have ended and won the fight,
Then all will be changed in a single night.
I'll certainly show no frenzy Byronic
And try to remain Napoleonic.
As things now stand, I'm bound to ride,
Whatever befall, with the winning side.
You Honor's face shows perplexity:
The Corsican still rules the stage, you see.
The tribune will be overthrown, without quarter,
The thinker be made one head the shorter.

Second Citizen

You German fool, wait! You're going to heaven
Just like those at Wesel, the famous eleven.

[*A detachment of French soldiers has meanwhile overthrown the tribune and is driving* Johann Gottlieb Fichte *before it from the stage. Immediately thereafter sounds a hollow roll of the drum.*

[*The second stage is revealed, showing eleven officers of Hussars in a heap beside a wall. The French division which has shot them stands with grounded arms. Between the French and the dead, in the background, stands the* Drummer Death. *His drum ceases to*

beat and now the third stage opens, disclosing once more NAPOLEON *and his* MARSHALS.

NAPOLEON

What was the meaning of that last volley?
Splendid fellows. Why, that's sheer folly.

FIRST FRENCH OFFICER

Eleven of Schill's own officers, Sire.

NAPOLEON

No pardon for them. Aye, let them expire.
If I should pardon such revolters,
My own head wouldn't stay long on my shoulders.
Such hot-heads have to be shot; 'tis well.
And the Major himself?

FIRST OFFICER

Alas, he fell.
At Stralsund, Sire, in a street affray.

NAPOLEON

A typical Prussian *tête carrée!*
The most ridiculous silly dare-devil.
After such intrigue and insurrection,
Prussia may look to her own protection.
My word, they don't know what they do,
These poor, down-trodden German peons,
That sweat for princes and lords, and in æons
Get a fowl once a decade to make a stew.
I free them from service everlasting,
I make them disused to sweating and fasting,
End their hereditary feudality,
Bring them back to humanity from old bestiality,

And like these hussars, they return me but evil.
And so I say: let them go to the devil.
Before my star was in the ascendant,
On their masters' lashings they were dependent;
Their hides were marked with many a weal,
Their swollen cheeks had no time to heal,
To the wine-press three hundred lords would feed them,
There to queeze them, knead them, tread them, bleed them.
I found only skins emaciated,
Weaklings, their sap evaporated.
Should this people's weakness suddenly vanish,
Should they try the kick that I call Spanish?
A Frenchman might sooner be a Herero
Than a German mutton become a Torero.
What did this Major take me for,
That laid his hand on the Tricolor?
I'm master of Italy, Netherland,
Of Oldenburg and East Friesland,
Of the Hansa cities and th' imperial free cities,
And Prussia is forced to sing French ditties.
Austria four times I've beaten,
Dirt she has eaten.
Whenever I spoke, the world was willing.
And should I be stopped by this paltry Schill-ing?
God forbid us such mortifications.
We're pursuing quite different speculations.
Well may Europe whisper and shake and dissemble:
Soon I shall set the world in a tremble.
Imminent now is the Unavoidable,
And the fate of East and West decidable.
To-morrow we'll have the army inspection,
Day after destroy the old world's complexion.

What is Europe? A puny state.
A so-called continent, would-be great.
A part of the earth? — Why, so is a stone —
But in my eyes it is none.
Where India sweats neath the lash of the Briton,
That's the spot for the world-ruling spider to sit on.
There my eagles shall go,— please note my candor —
There uniting the power of Charlemagne and Alexander.
Aye, the Chinese wall I'll bring to a tumble,
And a Central Realm to my needs I'll humble.
I share not Cæsar's ambitions vain:
All these things I shall easily gain.
The road to that goal is shorter far
Than the one I have come in the train of my star.

[*The second and third stages are curtained again. On the first one re-appears the* War-Fury.

The Fury

[*Swinging her torch.*

War! War! Ye have been slumb'ring.
The nations' guns are thund'ring.
War-flames everywhere
From Samarcand to Finisterre.
Woe to you, O Russian land!
You're in another Cæsar's hand.
On a throne above thrones he's upward leaping,
The ever-immortal Emperor.
His ever-thundering guns are sweeping
The earth his triumphant march before.
He beckons: monarchs bring, obeying,

Chariots, steeds, and swords for slaying.
And see what more they are conveying:
That is more, that is more!
His armies rule from shore to shore.
Italy's blood,
Spain's ardent mood,
Are caught in the all-destroying flood.
Their fiery striplings all are sending,
Germany, Austria, Holland, alike.
The flood swells roaring, then bursts the dike.
Eagles mount, screaming *Gloire.*
Guard thee, Tsar, guard thee, Tsar!
Six hundred thousand troops are ample
All your growing grain to trample.
The joy of vassalage you shall sample.
By undying suns irradiated,
Who follow like moths obedient:
The battle begun, the vict'ry's fated,
He slays or exalts, as expedient.
He makes, by signs mysterious,
Or corpses or half-gods delirious.
And when they cover the earth with bleeding,
His deathless suns on the blood 'gin feeding.
These are his divine, his heavenly hounds,
With their hot, greedy baying the earth resounds.
He has them or mute or baying or biting,
Rending peoples and lands in furious fighting.
I prophesy Russia's last death-song.
Ye have slept too long! Ye have slept too long!

[The Fury *rushes out. The orchestra has been in semi-darkness. Voices are now audible there.*

First Voice

Europe like a top he drives!

SECOND VOICE

The scourge of God on sinful lives!

THIRD VOICE

Ægis-shaper! Lightning-hurler!
Realm-disperser! Heaven-whirler!

[*The upper stage is disclosed, revealing* NAPOLEON *enthroned as* ZEUS, *the eagle at his feet. Lightning flashes in his hand, followed by a terrific thunder-clap. But the picture fades out in growing darkness, accompanied by a gradually advancing snow-storm. During the following is heard the ringing of sleigh-bells.*

VOICES

[*From the orchestra.*

Bow your heads, refuge taking!
See the lightning!
The stage is shaking.
It struck! But where?
Where, where? Where did it strike?
It is still, quite still.
Keep your places!
Smell the fire, sulphur-like.
Did the earth split before your faces?
Poor Germany!
Is that drops of blood I see?
No, it is rain. Woe, O woe!
'Tis not rain, 'tis bloody snow.
Hark, what's that: sighs of the dying!
Death-rattle of men in ice and snow lying!
Torn-off limbs and wounds! Ragged clumps!
Teeth-baring corpses! Bleeding lumps!

Hounds and wolves in entrails burrowing.
Death stark countenances furrowing.

[*It has become brighter. Only the first stage is still curtained. On it two Prussian sergeants are sitting at a green table by lamplight. They are holding goose-quills and have writing before them. Access to this stage is cut off by Prussian soldiers, who with guns at port are thrusting back German mothers of all classes as they press forward.*

First Mother

What has happened? Are they learning?
A rain of blood falls on my hand.

Second Mother

I do not see my son returning.
With Napoleon he marched to the Russian land.
He went for the king, at his command.
Until he returns, right here I stand.
Why did the king give away my son
To shed his blood for the Corsican?

First Clerk

Ma chère Madame, that is not clear.
We simply do our duty here.
But I will say this for your consideration,
Three hundred thousand young men are the Emperor's annual gift from the nation;
French mothers are called upon to bear them
And till slaughtering day to feed and prepare them.

THIRD MOTHER

Where is my son? Where is my son?
He marched with the Emperor Napoleon.
I commended him to God, with my kiss and blessing.
What's this bloody rain, my heart distressing?

FIRST GRENADIER (FRENCH)

I be *un Français.* We be *peuple,* camarade.
Ma mère 'as a son, 'as been soldier made.
In France they sleep not, it is many years,
Les mères at night, wiz sorrow an' tears.
Mon père est mort in ze fight, long, long,
'E 'as smile bloody smile in my face an' say: *bon!*
My son, learn to die: say *mon père.*
I 'ave see im zat once an' no more — nevaire!

THIRD MOTHER

What do I care for his goings on?
I wanted to know about my son.

SECOND CLERK

We're doing our soldier's duty here.
What's come of your son, does not appear.

FOURTH MOTHER

Oh, soldier's duty! — you make me wild.
Give me my child! Where is my child?
I saw in a dream a stream and it was red;
My child floated in it, and he was dead.

SECOND GRENADIER

Let your dream-books alone — don't be offended.
The *grande armée* is destroyed, but the emperor's health is splendid.

FIFTH MOTHER

You scoundrels, give us our sons, I say!

SECOND GRENADIER

Shut up, you fury, and fade away!
Or go and fish in the Beresina.
Forty thousand mother's sonlets
Float in it, swept there by the gunlets.
They do better work than the guillotina.
Perhaps your laddie will take the hook.
Try! But the cost of a shroud you'll have to shoulder.
What's to be done with the corpse of a soldier?

SIXTH MOTHER

Canaille! — Oh listen to them mock us!

FIRST CLERK

Pshaw! War is war, and cannot shock us.

FIRST MOTHER

If it is destroyed, *la grande armée,*
We mothers must wail for ever and aye.
And a tenfold curse for the blood just spilt;
God, write it in thy book of guilt.
That the sons we bore are by butchers slaughtered
By droves on the fields their sweat has watered.
That our darling babes who followed the clarion
Lie on the ground as stinking carrion.

SECOND GRENADIER

[*Seizes the* FIRST MOTHER, *to lead her away.*
Mr. Clerk, she needs other waters to swim in.

FIRST CLERK

That's right, they're surely dangerous women.
And this one may talk behind doors locked and bolted,
Till the good, quiet, peaceable citizens have revolted.

[*University teachers, students, high school boys, youths and boys of all classes have made their way through the women and liberate the* FIRST MOTHER *from her captor.*

FIRST STUDENT

[*Resembling Theodor Körner.*

No! Do not take the woman away!
See ye yonder the bloody ray?
The mystery I'll unravel.
Mother Russia lies in travail!
No, she has borne, she is delivered!
A devouring flame in her child's hair quivered!
A child most wild and fiercely featured,
A son all-mighty and lion-natured,
Stronger than kings, than army organization,
Its name: the honor of a nation.
National honor hight,
Slave-chains it rends with might.
Bailiff, remove thy hand and see:
Here is dear Mother Germany.
Knowest thou her, degenerate son?
That bore Luther, Dürer, and Melanchthon?
Our heavenly tongue was her contribution;
She shall now bear the god of retribution.

SECOND STUDENT

See ye the fan of fire glowing?
Mother Russia set it going.

For she did allow
The flames to consume her own Moscow:
Before it should bear the Corsican's soles,
She made it a bed of glowing coals.
And an angry heat is bred in the ashes
That the people's courage to fury lashes;
It singes the feet of the emperor glorious
And clouds the fame of the soldier victorious.
Then the Corsican felt a might
More strong than a victory in open fight:
It is the word of the mothers, the mothers!
The lightning flashes were its brothers.
As the thunder rolls from cloud to cloud,
So people to people cried aloud.
And so our mother will understand
The cry that has come from a sister land.

THIRD STUDENT

Mother, cease thy lamentation.
Though thy sons in death are lying,
Risk us others that we be trying
To win for our brothers retaliation.
See how yonder the human wave swells.
How in every breast youth and manhood wells.
Those are not hireling mercenaries,
But each in his veins thy true blood carries.
Give us thy blessing motherly,
We'll rush to the field and conquer for thee.
Bless our naked limbs: there will be no quailing
When we come into freedom's bullet-hailing.
Filial love will keep us,
When thy violator's guns with death and ruin sweep us.
Naked we shall rush at those hellish jaws,
And him thou mayst call illegitimate,

If not firm and hard he meets his fate,
Scorning loss of life for the holy cause.
For a joy of death cries out in us now,
To offer the enemy breast and brow.

[*The* Woman *liberated by the youths is led up to the next stage, which has opened. The figure grows, and a mass of auburn hair is loosened and rolls down her back to the earth. On the second stage an altar is erected, surrounded by priestesses in Greek garb, also by single groups of youths, led respectively by* Stein, Scharnhorst, Fichte, *and* Jahn.

The First Mother

[*About half-way up to the second stage, stands still and turns. She has been transformed into an apparition of almost superhuman kind.*

[*In an altered voice.*

Stand up, with trumpets blowing,
Let your guns be showing!
You that when small were born of my womb,
Infants, be great in your manhood's bloom!
You fathers and mothers, youths and daughters,
Be not hirelings: fight freely on lands and waters.
They sacrificed you on fields of dishonor:
The motherland calls, have compassion upon her.
The tyrant you served with willing drilling;
For your country be drilling, your mother is willing.
I give you away, nor count nor array you.
Choose, without choosing, your freedom, I pray you.
We're not a new people, though enemies claim it:

Our name is an old one, let men not defame it:
Though we be Bavarian, Swabian, Saxon,
To a common speech each his dialect tacks on;
Prussian, Thuringian, Badener, Hessian,
We're brothers, whatever our creed or confession,
And both Lorraine and her sister Alsace
Are wines that grew on the old home place.
I suckled all of you at my breast
In joy and unrest.
Forget all envy and civil strife:
Be as one, show the world the worth of your life.

BARON VON STEIN

[*Has advanced to the speaker.*

Mother, you are right.
Your words are goodly in our sight.
Wait, do you know this face of mine?
I am your son, am Baron von Stein.
Your thoughts my own heart have animated:
No question: that nick must be eliminated.
You were far too forbearing, you warmed too slowly,
But now you reveal your mother-love holy.
The ice has burst with the press of new life.
And now we'll have strife, only strife to the knife!
But check your outcries furious,
Ascending step by step with us.
See, there is a flame upon an altar
That long ago did faint and falter.
Vestals in weeds that never vary
Guarding a lifeless sanctuary:
Let us guide you thither, in state
The new High Mass to celebrate.
At once both priestess and goddess be.

We are not France, but Germany.
We'll make you of course a German Athene:
But wholly German, only half a Hellene.
'Twill give you no drop of foreign admixture.
In the native soil your roots are a fixture.
But this must be: if you are to serve us,
By night you must have owl-eyes to observe us,
And by day with eyes of azure
Heaven and earth see through and measure.
Then we must procure you other disguises:
Please bear in patience these little surprises.
On your head Athene's gold-helmeted splendor,
You shall be German unity's eternal defender.
The gleam from your golden lance-tip streaming
Be our folk-honor's token brightly gleaming.
And this your ægis you shall brandish,
You of all the mothers the mightiest,
When with rancorous envy and hate outlandish
They fill the ether, with quarrels the flightiest.
Then drive rats and mice away from the cheeses,
Send all vermin to freeze in the winter breezes,
And steel the German Achilleses, Ulyssesses and Herculeses.
Be the cogniting one, ne'er disuniting one,
The warming and lighting one, but if need be the igniting one!
Be the loving one, rarely detesting one,
But if need be, the firmly divesting one.

[*The* Woman *has been led up to the steps of the altar, and there she now stands erect and lofty, dressed and armed as Pallas Athene. Loud and enthusiastic acclamation from the throng.*

ATHENE GERMANIA

Ye have armed me well, that is good.
Exalted me as priestess and goddess.
I greet ye neath this golden hood,
Ye noble-hearted, with swelling bodice:
Ye men and boys, who the courage have taken
My body to arm, my soul to awaken.
Radiant youth, inexhaustible force,
Disciples of science and art at its source.
Sweet singers, poets, deep cogitators,
Our new life's founders and originators.
Step forward, young man by young man,
I'll bless you for victory or death, as I can.
From your own laurel-crowned thoughts arisen,
I must bend your necks, must the victims imprison.
Your thoughts you did give that I might live:
In return unto death your lives I give.
My commands are three:
From alien rule make Germany free!
See that your land united be!
And yourselves be free! Yourselves be free!

[*She has seized two of the young men by their long blond hair and bent their heads over the altar as for sacrifice. The throng applauds with enthusiasm, and voices are heard singing "Lützows wilde Jagd," "Frisch auf zum fröhlichen Jagen," "Was blasen die Trompeten, Husaren heraus," and so on. The entire vast scene grows dark. The roars of enthusiasm subside, and the songs die away. Only one figure is left:* PALLAS ATHENE, *erect and lofty in a mystical illumination. Also* PHILISTIADES *on the first stage.*

PHILISTIADES

You'll scarcely greet me with acclamation,
Spoiling this solemn consecration.
But what's to be done 'gainst the word of the director
When one's but a simple under-inspector?
This mighty up-roaring I vastly admire:
I love Plutonic and Olympian fire.
I wanted to include in our production
The glowing lava on its path of destruction.
But when he got this information
He cried: art is abbreviation.
Life goes on in rambling prolixity;
Art must be ending, its rules are a fixity.
Well, it is true, the decisive word is spoken:
Our hero-doll, the Corsican's broken.
The fortune of war surged forward and back,
But the director no longer cleared his track.
He struggled with overwhelming force,
Yet he won, for instance, at Lützen, of course:
Beat Scharnhorst and Blücher, beat Russian and Prussian.
At Bautzen he struck with more frightful concussion.
He beat them at Dresden, at *la Rothière*,
But at Leipzig and Waterloo luck was not there.
His banners sank, his eagles were frightened,
The comb of the Gallic cock was whitened.

He takes a ship's model from his knapsack and holds it high.

Now here is a ship, called Bellerophon,
Emits sounds of pain when tapped upon.
It bears the mighty Napoleon
As captive of mighty Albion.

To a vasty void it directs its motion,
To the lonesomest isle in the lone Middle-ocean.
And what beats there against the shrouds
Is the heart that was known to a thousand crowds.
And the terrible will, that naught could face,
Lies conquered in the ship's embrace.
And mile after mile the vessel covers,
They take him away where oblivion hovers.
Where a will the stoutest and most tenacious
Must prey on itself in the solitude spacious.
He will struggle in vain with a fate contrary
In those spaces infinite, solitary.
Sleepless in his chains he'll languish,
As once his foes on their beds of anguish.

[*He turns and seems to see* ATHENE GERMANIA *again for the first time.*

But what do I see, the great godhead
In the changes of time has not been dead:
She raises her helmeted head to the light.
This coup of my chief I don't see, quite.
For if she continues to stand and tower,
Then sacred Reason will come to power.
Then what of the world and my imbecility
Before this maid-mother's armed ability?
Her splendor pierces, her silence appals me.
Some impulse, I feel, from this platform calls me.
On entanglements rests the drama of humanity,
But this silence resolves all departures from sanity.
When she hurls her spear, or her voice we hear,
The infiltrating light is no longer clear.
It might be said that deeds undignify.
Silence is gold: so these feelings signify.

[*Behind* ATHENE GERMANIA, *on the topmost stage, the façade of a Gothic*

cathedral gradually becomes visible. Moreover, ATHENE's *helmet, shield, and spear shed a steadily growing radiance.*

And the sun, the source of heavenly brightness,
Silently sheds a silent lightness.
From his wakening, nourishing rays man derives
Love-enkindled human lives.
The fruits from grasses and trees he entices,
And wild-flowers bloom where in winter the ice is.
And strange: this one of an ancient race
Transforms and upbuilds with silent face,
While she leads them up to the holy place:
High above warfare's dark delusion,
High above victory's bloody confusion.

ATHENE GERMANIA

[*To a soft, ethereal harmony of transparent tones.*

What new accords, what purest tones strike on my ear,
Now that from bloody night pure daylight doth appear.
The bonds dissolve, that nightmare dreams about me forged,
And free and rich the lucid light is joined with me.
And as the dark from shield and sword and helmet flows
To Hades, so is dripping from my spirit too
And leaving me, all darkness. And the bloody spooks
Are gone. Still trembling from the bath of night's black dreams
I enter now Olympus' pure, unsullied peaks,
The radiant home of blessed gods, expanding far

And high into the ether's bright and different bath.
And penetrating world and all and me at once,
I see the meaning of my life and shining arms:
They are for deeds of peace, and not for deeds of war.
They are for benefits, and never for misdeeds!
But warfare's naked murder, say, what else is that?
So then I call on ye, that in another war
Have warred! That brought not death, but have created life!
I gave to you the golden weapon, sacred tool,
To dig the ripened fruit from stony soil. I made
You wrestlers with delusion. Of unseeing hate
I tore the bandage from your eyes; and made you love.
I showed you how to tread your paths with feet of peace
Enwreathed and fair. I taught you how to lay broad ways
For love's fraternal tread. The unforgiving gulf
I bade be still, and alienating things be fused
Into the bridge's arch. Now man with man unites
Across the gulfs, as folk with folk. And caravans
Bear precious loads, but do not feel dissension's weight.

[*In the orchestra appears the head of a well-proportioned procession, which embraces all the activities and blessings that peace entails. With banners, flags, and garlanded tools the workingman marches beside the farmer, the noble beside the commoner, the miner beside the sailor and fisher. Beautiful women of all classes, but especially country girls are*

among them, carrying baskets of fruit, sheaves of grain, etc. The procession is crowned as it were by great men of all ages; portrait-like representations of artists, poets, scientists, philosophers, composers, and inventors. Also some rulers who have really advanced the highest interests of their people. Wreath-crowned boys carry festooned name-plates behind the personages thus distinguished.

ATHENE GERMANIA

Lo, what a throng ascends the steps to reach my side:
How sweet to me to hear the rustle of their flags,
Well-known from ancient service in my templed shrine.
Ascend, ascend! I feel as if I were but now
Become a goddess, and Olympus' glory were
An emptiness, as 'twere another darksome night.
Here where I am, and where ye throng, here is the light:
We, never parted, e'er united ones, of war
Know nothing. Therefore peace is dwelling here with us.
Not there, not yonder, not perchance by us enclosed,
As by a sacred troop that guards its sovereign lord.
No, no! Our spirits and its spirit are at one.
No tongues divide us, streams and seas divide us not.
No gods divide, nor can the unknown god divide
Those men who have at heart the common weal of man.

What does divide is error; what alone can loose
Blind hate, is ignorance, is hunger's naked need!
Not the divine that in the human spirit dwells.
For this divine impulse is Eros! Eros is
The forming one, creator! Every thing that lives
Is Eros, born of Eros, grows in him, and him
Begets anew. And he begets the world anew! —
What purpose serves the human eye without him?
He
Alone reveals the beautiful to ear, to eye,
To sense of smell, to feeling — last not least
To lightning-pinioned thought, that in a trice all
space,
Though boundless, measures. Better servants do
not serve the gods.
And therefore, Eros let us praise! Therefore this
feast
Is vowed to love that was made flesh, and that bears
fruit
In spirit! From which spirit come its other fruits,
In word and tone, in works create of ore and
stone,
Proportion, order, and in short in deeds and work.
So follow me into this German structure's feast of
love,
Approach that wonder, which my sure, unerring
word
May call the sacredest of all that fate can give.
To you I need not name, however, what yourselves,
A burning happiness, bear in your heart of
hearts.

[*Amid the resounding tones of a mighty organ and the peal of bells, led by* Athene, *the procession vanishes little by little in the interior of the cathedral.*

The curtains close, and the DIRECTOR *steps out in front of the first one.*

THE DIRECTOR

I was the first, and I am the last one,
I'm the beginning and I'm the completing one,
I am the food and I am the eating one,
Ever immovable, never held-fast one.
I am the speaker, and yet no betrayer,
Much more discreet than those people back there,
Gods and men, and shifters of scenery —
In short, my whole play-acting machinery —
Who to be sure for some time to come
Will shine in silence — they too are dumb.
But who comes climbing up here? Hey!
Who are you, you fire-eater?

BLÜCHER

[*Coming up the steps with rattling sabre.*
Marshal Forward!

THE DIRECTOR

My information's completer:
March into the sawdust, the excelsior, the seaweed,
I say!
You're a doll, my property personal,
The shade of a long dead general.

BLÜCHER

What's that tinkle of peace-bells? The air's all trembly.
I'm still alive!

THE DIRECTOR

You'd like to be.

BLÜCHER

We're not going to Gethsemane!
Buglers! Forward! Play the Assembly!
What do I want of this peace-tirili?
I'm for infantry and cavalry.

THE DIRECTOR

To your box!

BLÜCHER

Hey? What? Box? Try and see.
[*He has drawn his sword.*

THE DIRECTOR

To your place, you brave gray-bearded sire.
But your word shall live, though you expire.
To your country I give it, as destiny's foreword —
Not your joy of battle, but — your: Forward!
[*The old marshal, touched by the director's wand, drops lifeless.*

THE BOW OF ODYSSEUS

PERSONS

ODYSSEUS
TELEMACH
LAERTES
ANTINOOS
AMPHINOMOS
KTESIPPOS
EURYMACHOS
The Wooers of Penelope
EUMÆUS, *a swineherd*
LEUCONE, *his granddaughter*
MELANTEUS, *a goatherd*
MELANTO, *his daughter*
NOAIMON, *a young swineherd*
EURYCLEA
GLAUKOS
LYKURGOS
IDOMENEUS
HEKTOR
LAMON
DRYAS
EUPHORION
Herdsmen

THE FIRST ACT

A region upon the island of Ithaca, high and hilly and covered for the most part with forests of immemorial oaks. In the foreground a rocky ascent which leads to the farm of EUMÆUS.

It is noon.

EUMÆUS, *the swineherd, a very vigorous man, though over sixty, is sitting on a bench beside the gate busily anointing with tallow a beautifully carved bow. Next to him, on the ground, a wooden bowl holding the tallow, as well as a wine jug and a cup.*

At the foot of the ascent appear two maidens of beautiful form who carry pitchers on their heads and are about to mount the hillside. The first of the water carriers is MELANTO, *daughter of the goatherd* MELANTEUS, *the other is* LEUCONE, *the grandchild of* EUMÆUS. *The girls stop to rest, taking the pitchers from their heads.* MELANTO *has reddish brown hair; her form is soft and sensuous.* LEUCONE *is slender and dark, of perfect form and austerely noble beauty.*

MELANTO

Nothing but bitter toil and care! I never
Lived through such evil days as here with you.

Surely, thou grudgest answer! Am I then
Of meaner birth? My father of estate
Lower than thy grandfather? One herds swine,
The other goats! A mighty difference!
Yet there's no other.

LEUCONE

'Tis the truth, Melanto.
Yet what help can I give thee? Still thy plaint
Is loud over this terrible drouth sent down
By Father Cronion on us, which I
Cannot prevent; nor make to flow again
The holy fountains from the arid hills.
Do I not fare down the steep path like thee
Unto the shore and Arethusa's well?

MELANTO

Ah, all were well didst thou but deign to speak.
For I am wont to dwell in palaces
And have received kind words and favour high.
For are they not greater than thou, the princes
Who, striving for Penelope's hand, yet spurned
Melanto not as of too humble stripe?

LEUCONE

[*Sighs.*]

Now I have nothing but my silence, girl.

MELANTO

Ay, nurse that silence, proud and arrogant!
And yet the truth is true! Oh, I could speak
Of things would make thy wide eyes wider yet.
Chief of the wooers is Eurymachos,
No man on Ithaca dare question that

Nor any woman — nor Penelope —
Who pants after him as doth the hart, but he
Grudges her not unto Antinoos,
Pursuing me, even me, with love. My shadow
Is not so faithful as Eurymachos.

LEUCONE

Were I to speak it were to vex thee. So,
Melanto, let us calmly go our ways.

MELANTO

And why, I pray thee, was I exiled here?
Who knows not that were blind indeed, Leucone.
Thou knowest it as surely as do I.
'Tis not Eurymachos alone that takes
Delight in me, but all who see me: this
Penelope's jealousy will not endure.

LEUCONE

To please such men as those who desecrate
The palace's hospitality below
Is not so difficult as many deem:
And were they pleased with me, I'd hold that pleasure
A bitterer pain than being stoned to death.

MELANTO

Art thou so chaste, Leucone? Ah, one knows
The story of thy chastity; wherefore
Thou followest the heroes in the hall
Still with thine hatred. What delights thee is
The red, full, kissing mouth of the unfledged youth.
Thou lovest the down more than the beard, the shyness

Of hesitant boys more than the strength of them
Who, sighing not, snatch the delight they would.
But thy effeminate weakling is a mark
Of jeering to all proper island men.
It may be that one pities him, would stroke
His curving cheek as though it were a girl's,
Thinking: "How awkward in thine innocence
O Telemachos, art thou and pitiable!
How, against heroes, canst thou guard thine own?"
And he would say: "Oh fetch a nurse that she
May spread my couch: mine eyes are heavy with sleep."

[*She laughs immoderately.*]

O strange and laughable thy nursling is!

LEUCONE

[*Helping her lift the pitcher to her head.*]

The errors that thou lovest thou must keep,
Melanto. But the nursling of thy jeers
Is no less than our fathers' lord and ours,
And in the days to come thy heart will be
Mindful of what thou hast forgotten now.

[LEUCONE *has also lifted the pitcher to her head and the two girls ascend the hillside. They are about to pass* EUMÆUS *and enter the farmyard when the swineherd stops them.*

EUMÆUS

Melanto!

Ay, what is 't?

EUMÆUS

Leucone, look!

Younger thine eyes than mine. Does there not climb
A man unto our heights?

LEUCONE

Nay, I see no one.
Grandfather.

EUMÆUS

Thou seest no one?

LEUCONE

No one, nay.

EUMÆUS

Then still a demon doth confuse mine eyes.
For ever clearly I behold men climb
The summits of our hills. One had white hair,
And yestereve it was a youth. But when
I rise to greet them, 'tis as though a god
Made them dissolve into mere smoke and air.

[MELANTO *goes on through the gate and enters the farmyard.*

EUMÆUS

How promises the new maid in the house?

LEUCONE

Not well, grandfather. Had the queen but spared
To send this woman to our quiet house,
Blaspheming all things dear unto our hearts!

EUMÆUS

Oh, if on Ithaca there reigned a man,
He would have had this wench well scourged and sent

In chains to the Phœnician slave-dealers
For her loose ways and evil in the palace,
And not brought her unto the hills and us.
Not thus Penelope, the all too mild.
What help is there? The prey is here and all
The hounds upon her trail and in our stead —
Those hounds in heat from whom they have stolen her.
Two nights ago when that Antinoos
With his wild boon-companions climbed our wall
And like a mountain wolf broke in our court
I marked as well the fierce Eurymachos
Who is Melanto's lover above all.
She lured him to the insolent deed and he
Drew after him the others of his kind.
But they received a bloody welcome here,
Their evil prank ending in fear and shame.
How often sawest thou Antinoos, girl?

Leucone

I saw him in the council of the men
When Telemachos asked the ship to fare
Upon the sea and he would have denied it.
Then I saw him, he me, for the first time
And never since that day. He spake to me
With speech and manner and empty words I loathe.

Eumæus

Truly. "The shepherd Paris on Mount Ida"
Thus spake he, "saw thee not, fair shepherdess,
Else had the holy Aphrodite even
Not gained the apple in the contest there."
Have tidings from the city come, Leucone,
Speaking of Telemach's return from Pylos?

LEUCONE

Scarcely, for still I see the spies in ambush.

EUMÆUS

Where seest thou spies?

LEUCONE

Yonder I see them well,
Even though they seek to hide their forms, and clearly.
They are the spies sent by Antinoos.
They lie in wait upon the promontories,
Watchful for weeks, like robbers of the wild,
To slay our lord and theirs when he appears.

EUMÆUS

[*Arising and gazing upon his work.*
Father Cronion, father of the oppressed,
Guide Telemachos on his voyaging
And send his sails a favorable wind.

LEUCONE

And bring him safely through the bight to land.
[*She and* EUMÆUS *gaze anxiously toward the sea.*

EUMÆUS

Can man be such? This same Antinoos
Whom once Odysseus rocked upon his knees,
Foretelling him heroic future days,
Now seeks the life of the king's only son
And nurses other plans too dark for speech.
[*He rises.*
If but that mighty arm came to this land
To bend again this bow's unbendable string.

Leucone

[*Looking at the bow in her father's hand. Her pitcher is still on her head.*

Is that Odysseus' bow?

Eumæus

Even his,
His and no other's, girl. Didst ever see
Another bow like this in all the world?
Not I, not ever! In ancient days Apollo
Once bent it ere Silenos carried it
The wise old centaur, teacher of the youth
Of Dionysos. In immemorial days
'Twas brought to Lacedæmon, there a hunter
Found it; to Iphitus it passed, and he
Being our lord's host gave it him as a gift.
Thine eyes ask questions, never yet sawest thou
The weapon in my hand. Behold, for years
I guard it ever hidden out of reach.
Were not the serfs far in the fields away
Guarding our herds, were solitary not
Our farmstead — had I not dreamed last night
Mysteriously, strangely, I would not
Sit here holding the weapon in my hand.

Leucone

What is it thou didst dream?

Eumæus

I know not. None
Must know it save the holy seer, child.
To-morrow will I fare unto the town
And tell him of these things.— Child, wert thou not
Beside my couch in the still night hours?

LEUCONE

Ay.

EUMÆUS

And thou didst hold a spear?

LEUCONE

I grasped a spear
And held it in my arm.

EUMÆUS

And why didst thou
Take the long spear and step unto my couch?

LEUCONE

Methought that I heard voices call and heard
The wolves once more baying about our wall.

EUMÆUS

Thou has peopled my dream from thine own dreams,
Leucone.
It seemed to me that on thy shoulder sat
Athena's bird of wisdom, that thy lips
Spake things divine divinely. It is well.
I have done as I was bidden, have anointed
The bow with tallow, and the sounding string
Lies here prepared. Now may he come, that archer,
For whom the arrows have been kept so long.
[*A baying of hounds is heard.*
What is it? Why that uproar?

LEUCONE

'Tis the beggar,
I see him — yonder! — From the forest he comes.

EUMÆUS

Ho, beggar! Lift a stone and hurl it at them!

[*He whistles to the dogs whose wild barking approaches; then lifts up a stone and runs away, crying.*

Ho Warder, Wolf and Guardian! Ho! Come here!

[*A beggar appears — breathless and driven and throws himself at* LEUCONE's *feet, embracing her knees. It is* ODYSSEUS, *irrecognisable through age and misery and his rags.*

ODYSSEUS

Thou lofty one, whether thou be a goddess,
Or else one of the daughters of this island,
Praying for refuge I lie at thy feet.
Thy countenance is likest an immortal's!
Happy thy father! Happy she who bore thee!
Thrice happy he who, some day, calls thee his.

LEUCONE

I am naught but a herd girl, O strange man.

ODYSSEUS

Then would I wish to exalt thee till thou be
The equal of thy worth, wishing I were
What once I was in better days of old.
[*In apparent exhaustion he lets his head sink.*

LEUCONE

[*To* EUMÆUS *who comes back hastening.*
He breathes no more.

Eumæus

Breathes he no more?

Leucone

Ah, no.

Eumæus

Hurry into the house and bring the balsam
I gained in barter from the trading ship
Lately of the Phœnician! And bring wine!
For wine is healing when life's hardship grown
Too bitter robs the strength that is in man.

[Leucone *goes into the house.* Eumæus *busies himself about* Odysseus.

It is too late! Artemis from her quiver
Has sent a gentle shaft to set him free.

Odysseus

Thou errest, friend! Him whom, here in the dust,
Thou seest in tears the divine arrow shuns!
Deaf is the goddess to my prayers; I must
Still bear my life, still bear it on and drag
A woe that knows no measure and no end,
Hateful to heaven and by the generations
Of men cast forth in darkness and forgotten.

Eumæus

Despair not, friend, whoever thou mayest be!
It is not seemly that, ere thou hast gained
New strength from food and drink, I question thee,
Upon the manner of thy sorrows! Which
Of all the gods pursues thee most with hate?
But be assured: the immortal gods alone
Are free of lamentation! Ay, not they

Wholly! Arise! Think of the heavenly ones,
And drink!

[Leucone *has poured a cup full of wine and gives it to* Odysseus.

Odysseus

Shall I think of the heavenly powers,
Wrapt round by shadows? I, one who has died?
I, so forgotten? Who from the realm below
Inured to darkness, but emerges, one
Scarcely remembering them who walk in light?
To whom pour I libation? Helios? He
Pursues me with his unendurable light?
Or to Poseidon, unforgiving lord?
To whom then? Ah, to Orcus and to thee
Persephone I pour the dark wine out!

[*From the cup which he holds in both hands he spills some drops of wine: then drinks thirstily. Having drunk he returns the empty cup to* Leucone.

I thank thee, lofty maiden, that thou didst
Refresh my soul with wine. Thus did I pour
Blood for the dead below; 'twas dark and sweet
And fragrant like thy wine and all the shades
Slaked their unspeakable thirst as I do here.
And O my mother, with the naked sword
I strove to hinder thee lest thou shouldst drink
The blood! 'Twas agony to my heart and yet
I did it! Yet at last thou drankest too,
And then thy ghostly lips did tremble and speak,
And words themselves like shadows thy shade's mouth
Whispered! O mother, thrice did I spring forth
To embrace thee dear and lost, and thrice thine image

Melted, like to a dream, in nothingness!
O mother, all about me is a dream!

Eumæus

Confusedly thou speakest, O strange man,
And fearfully. Be gracious, Zeus, who guardest
The hospitable hearth. Come thou and rest.

[*He leads the beggar to the bench where the latter sits down. Then he continues.*

A herdsman am I, servant of my lord,
Yet masterless. Does that seem strange to thee?
It is most strange, yet it is truth and seems
No easy burden, easily to be born,
Rather a thing of grief and of affliction.
Yet silence thereof, for the gods have willed it.
And he, my master, yet not mine, doth bear
A heavier load than I who still untouched
By lack of aught feast me upon his wealth
While he afar wanders or else is dead!
So in his name I bid thee welcome here,
And as I share with thee his wine and bread,
Thus may the gods ordain that unto him
The like be done as I do unto thee
Where he, perchance, bare of all needful things,
Knocks at some gate, craving the gifts of men.
Tarry a little, strengthen thee with wine
That lightens ill! Meanwhile I will prepare
All things and call thee to the cheerful board
When all is ready.

[Eumæus *taking the bow and arrows with him disappears in the yard. The beggar sits for a space lost in thought.* Leucone *stands near him and regards him thoughtfully. Suddenly he moves his lips.*

ODYSSEUS

Tell me the name this land
Bears that I look upon!

LEUCONE

'Tis Ithaca.

ODYSSEUS

[*Turns slowly and looks at* LEUCONE *strangely and absent-mindedly.*]
I ask thee this land's name in which I am.

LEUCONE

This land is Ithaca.

ODYSSEUS

[*Seems not to understand and gazes into the far regions of the isle.*]
Never shall I,
(Do I not feel it, cruel powers above?)
See even the smoke of my ancestral hearth
Rise in the distant sky!

LEUCONE

Tell me, strange man —
Surely thou camest not afoot! Then where
Did thy companions draw their keels ashore?

ODYSSEUS

[*Without hearing or answering the girl's question still stares immovably at the landscape.*
To what new torment have the hostile gods
Consigned me? Helplessly I grope about,

Shadowed in madness! Where I landed?
Where?
It is not known to me. With whom I came?
I know it not. And whence? Ah, could I tell!

Leucone

If thou art stricken in soul so that thou knowest
Neither the whence nor whither of thy ways,
Then must thy sorrows have been measureless
And measureless the immortals' ire which still
Pursues thee. For my simple mind can think
Not of a punishment more terrible
Than madness! When the empty darkness rules
Behind the forehead of a man where else
Sat the clear child of Zeus enthroned — then even
The writhing worm o' the slime is happier
And lordlier than that man. Oh, how could eye
Of mortal or of any god endure
To see the dead in soul eat, drink and walk
In the earth's ways?

Odysseus

Tell me: What is this land!

Leucone

Though thou know not the wind that brought thee
here,
Yet know — and of this one thing be assured —
Old man, that this is Ithaca. Here reigned
Odysseus once! Once, not to-day! To-day
Our lords are violence, hate, oppression, murder!

Odysseus

And who, who, sayest thou did in old days wield
The scepter here? Who was the man?

LEUCONE

A god.

ODYSSEUS

What name gave men to him?

LEUCONE

Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS

Ah, speak that word again! Clear! Sound by sound!

LEUCONE

There is no goatherd in Hellenic lands
So deaf, so separate from all the world,
But that his soul is awed by the great fame
Of that Odysseus. . . . But that his very bones
Do tremble at the name of him whom thou
Unblessèd man pretendest not to know.

ODYSSEUS

I know him.

[*He hides his head.*

LEUCONE

Truly thou must know the man
Before whom fell the cities of the earth!
Wisest in council, through whose skill and craft
Sank the impregnable towers of Ilion.

ODYSSEUS

[*Uncovers his head again. Mysteriously the landscape of the island outspread there seems to attract his gaze.*

The demons mock me! O ye woods whose green
Covers the lofty cliff side like a fleece!

O bay which the stream seeks! There willows
stand
And poplars! And the fishers cast their nets,
And white sails glide beyond! Oh, though I close
Mine eyes or open, picture changes not —
A blessing unto sight and unto soul!
And though no visible barrier shuts it in,
My glance rests as though finding refuge sweet,
After long wandering in an inn prepared
Even by the grace of the immortal gods.
And yet it is delusion!

LEUCONE

So this land
Is no strange land to thee?

ODYSSEUS

Softly . . . I dream!
Or doth there lie beyond those gentle hills
Resting in shadow of the olive groves,
Hiding the river, sloping toward the shore —
Lies not behind them? . . . Hidden . . . Ay!
Ah, no!
Thou liest! I know it! Lies there not the city
And royal seat of him whose name thou didst
Speak but this hour?

LEUCONE

Ay, it is so, in truth . . .

ODYSSEUS

Pallas, high goddess, was it thy voice that spake?
Dividest thou the mists with one great flash
That slays me not? O homeland, art thou there?

Standest on earth's foundations still and waitest
Faithfully as though fate had been a friend?
And art thou made of earth?
[*He picks up a handful of earth.*
Ay, this is it . . .
Is gold, not earth! Ambrosial sustenance,
Not earth! Nay, only simple earth and not
Base gold, base food of the immortals, only
Earth, earth, earth, earth! And yet this lowly dust
Is costlier than purple, precious more
Than freighted silks of the Phœnician looms,
More easeful that Calypso's lovely bed,
Sweeter than Circe's body wonderful,
More magic to the touch. Behold I am
A beggar and have nothing in the world
Save these poor rags! Offer me Helen's breasts,
Give me the holy citadels of Troy!
I'd weigh them not against this grain of earth.

LEUCONE

Who art thou?

ODYSSEUS

I? Odysseus . . . was my friend.

LEUCONE

O good, old man, let not that dangerous word
Slip from thy tongue when thou art in the house
And sittest at the hospitable board.
For far too often men come — like to thee —
Whether through greed or need — full of wild tales,
Feigning to tell us of Odysseus' fate.
They sit and feed until the torches smoulder
And lie with brazen forehead of our lord.

I counsel thee: Speak of Odysseus not!
Neither assert that thine own eyes have seen him,
Nor that a guest friend told thee tales of him,
Nor that he fared but shortly from a land
Thou visitedst thereafter! Do not say
He lives! Let it not come into thy mind
To swear thou wert his spear bearer of old
On Trojan fields, or that thou wert with him
Once hidden in the belly of the horse.
If thou desirest protection, gift or rest,
Beware lest some imagined demon drive
Thee unto prophecy of his return.
For it is certain that he comes no more.

Odysseus

And why so certain?

Leucone

Far away from here
The gods decreed his everlasting doom,
And there is nothing more for us to hope.

Odysseus

So you have certain message of his death?
And died he nobly?

Leucone

Ask Poseidon that!
Who drives him o'er the bitter waves o' the sea,
Whether he fell in fighting pirate ships,
Or whether in inglorious struggle him
The angry sea devoured.

Odysseus

Men say — and do they speak
Truthfully — that thirteen unshorn Achæans

Of them whom once the hero led afar
Against the Trojan walls, have safe returned
In days but now gone by?

Leucone

But now gone by?
Not one returned in all the twenty years,
And so let no man doubt that he is dead.
And he has passed beyond the ken of man,
And hope were blasphemy. Oh, ill enough
Waiting has brought and doubt and hesitation.
What dost thou?

Odysseus

Naught! The chill shakes me: the air
Blows cold upon your mountains. 'Tis well. I will
For the sake of food — for I am hungry — name
Never the name that hovers on my tongue,
And raze it from my memory for the sake
Of a piece of mouldy bread. But tell me then:
Who was it vaulted me the hero's mound,
And poured libations in his memory?
Was any left to do that memory grace?

Leucone

Old man, this is the question makes my soul
Tremble in care ever since Telemach
Put forth to sea to get him counsel wise
In sandy Pylos from old Nestor's lips,
And I myself persuaded him to it!
Also I bade him, for the last time, seek,
If of the winds, word of his father's fate,
And any hope that he still breathed on earth.
I bade him, hoping nothing, certain rather

Of the extreme doom — yet counseling so that
He might in manly wise stem idle grief
And unblessed, curve him the memorial mound,
Sacrifice and give gifts and hold henceforth,
Free of all doubt the sceptre and hold sway
As ruler of the isle. But now our lot
Is waiting, watching that eats into the heart
Since he is gone. We waited for the father
Now wait we for the father and the son.
To-day the son's return doth seem to me
A joy far deeper to be wished than even
The coming of Odysseus! For he is young,
Odysseus old, and we have need of strength
And of the vigour of the arm of youth.
For weeks I stand upon the shore and gaze,
Until mine eyes ache, over the boundless sea.
Oh, had I wings like to the crane, could fly
To warn the unsuspecting Telemach
And point with finger at the murderers
Who hide in hollows of the coast in ships
To slay him as their evil hearts have planned.

Odysseus

Thou speakest of a man called Telemach!
Was't not the name once of Odysseus' son
Whom he left here, a suckling at the breast?
Telemach? Does he live? Has the forgotten
And luckless wanderer a living son?

Leucone

Art thou in dreams still? Also the lad's mother
Divine Penelope is still alive!
The strangest mother, surely, that was ever
Given a son on earth: she is surrounded
By bands of insolent wooers who do homage

To her and with wild waste destroy and scatter
Her son's possessions and plot against his life.
Thou smilest! This seems madness unto thee.
And yet those men who cross the estuaries
With shameless sails bellowing in the wind
Are that Penelope's royal parasites,
Reared by her patience, by her weakness bred,
Who sate her troubled soul with flatteries
Until she is confused and weak and weaves
A web she would not finish evermore
And still unravels in the silent night.
And if these wooers win to slay the son
Of her they woo, then will the web be not
The shroud of old Laertes! It will be
The shroud of him her womb in pain has borne.

Odysseus

[*Breaks his staff.*
Ye will not let it be, O heavenly powers!

Eumæus

[*Appearing at the gate of the yard.*
Two pigs are crackling on the spit for us,
Come in.

Leucone

He moans.

Eumæus

Art thou sick?

Leucone

One can see
Only the white of his eye in pain, grandfather.

EUMÆUS

Let be! Bring me the mixing jug, Leucone
Famished is this man's soul! Who hath not known
How lack of all doth break the strength of one
Who in the bottom of the wooden ship
Must watch the moons arise and the moons sink.
[LEUCONE *goes into the yard.*

Thy foot is on the solid earth, good father,
Arise, enter my house and honour next
The board that has been spread against thy need.

ODYSSEUS

[*Supported by* EUMAEUS, *arises slowly and gazes at the spot on which* LEUCONE *stood but now.*

The goddess? Tell me: whither vanished she,
The fair immortal who from the head of Zeus
Sprang gleaming? She was with me! Ay, she stood
Scarcely two paces from thee, stood, and spake!
And what she spake I'd treasure in my heart
Until the fortunate hour, if one more such
Be destined for me, makes my tongue o'erflow.
But now grant me that with my lips I touch
The holy threshold ere I cross it! How
Should I affront this venerable stone,
Yearned for through, ah, how many sleepless nights
In the wild passion of my desperate prayers?

[*He lies down and touches the threshold with his lips. Long he lies there in silence. Then he arises and slowly disappears with* EUMAEUS *within the gate.*

THE SECOND ACT

Within the house of the swineherd EUMÆUS. *Walls of unhewn stone. In the background the great hearth with a smouldering fire: above it a chimney. The whole oblong chamber is blackened with smoke. Behind the hearth other rooms adjoin this: they serve the needs of the house and farm. Within them are troughs for feed, amphoræ for the storing of wine. The floor consists of uneven flagstones.*

The outer chamber has a door in either wall. That at the left remains closed. A long, very ancient wooden table occupies the greater part of the space. Here EUMÆUS *is in the habit of eating with his manservants and maidservants.*

MELANTO *is busy in the adjoining room.* LEUCONE *passes her and enters. She carries a ewer filled with water in her hands.*

MELANTO

Where tarriest thou? Who is without the gate?

LEUCONE

One whose misfortunes make him our fit guest.

[*Through the door at the right which now opens comes* EUMÆUS *supporting the beggar from the yard.*

Eumæus

Never saw I a man thy equal yet
In deep humility. Oh, raise thee up!
Forget and though it be for briefest space
The hardships of thy struggles and thy years.

Odysseus

What have I not forgotten!

Eumæus

Rest thee here
And let Melanto wash thy feet. Come, girl,
And do this service for the poor old man.

Melanto

[*Looking in, boldly.*
I wash the feet of scaly beggarmen?
Have I fallen so low! Then woe to me indeed!

Leucone

It is my office. Here I am, grandfather.
And let the fretting maiden mind her task.

Eumæus

Ay, follow thy task, girl. But remember this:
Though I seem not to look on thee nor watch
Thy doings. Once the day must come when thou
Shalt reap an hundred fold what thou hast sown.

Odysseus

[*As* Melanto *laughs a jeering laugh.*
Oh let me rest upon the cold hearth stone,
And cover me with the ashes of this house,
And suffer me the while, remembering not.

EUMÆUS

Welcome thou art and not endured, O stranger.

ODYSSEUS

Welcome to thee, not to the gods; of thee
Blessèd, but to the heavenly ones accursed.
[*He cowers in the ashes and kisses the hearthstone.*

EUMÆUS

What doest thou? The stone of this plain hearth
Harbors no demon that would vex thee, naught
That thou must or appease or fear, but guards
A hospitable fire for thee and me.
And now, be not unmanned. Art thou pursued
For guilt's sake? 'Twas a mighty guilt and thou
Borest thyself heroically in it.
Be no less strong and manly expiating.

ODYSSEUS

Let me caress the red flame of this hearth,
Press my dishonoured and accursèd face
Deep in the glow thereof, even as a child
Hides in its mother's lap its frightened head.
Leave me!

EUMÆUS

His mind is stricken.

MELANTO

Or else he is
Naught but a very cunning thief of pigs,
Seeing his profit thus.

EUMÆUS

Come thou and eat.

[*He and* LEUCONE *raise* ODYSSEUS *and lead him to the table, helping him to sit down.* EUMÆUS *turns again to* MELANTO.

Curb thy bold tongue a little, red-haired wench!
Remind me not of those dark thieves of night
Whom once before I chased in pitiful plight.

MELANTO

Thou'llt vex me not; thou knowest they come again!
Evil fares he who harms a hair o' my head.

EUMÆUS

Why dost thou tremble at my touch and gazest
So full of horror?

ODYSSEUS

Master, I am afraid.

EUMÆUS

Of what?

ODYSSEUS

Even of the maidservants in thine house.

MELANTO

'Tis wise in thee. But do not end by giving
A story of Odysseus' homecoming.

ODYSSEUS

[*With a throttled cry.*

Never! He who is lost can come no more!

MELANTO

Right so! For we drive liars out with whips.

EUMÆUS

Desecratest thou this man's grief, Melanto,
With insolent words? Tormentest him pursued
Even in the peace of this house till a cry
Of fear and horror is wrung from his sad heart?
Oh well I know where thou hast learned such ways!
Friend full of grief, 'tis but a worthless wench
And godless, coarse of heart, who does not know
That one whom some immortal's curse pursues
Carries the immortal's stamp upon his brow.
It is enough! Away from here, vile wench!

[While MELANTO *goes with a jeering shrug,* NOAIMON, *a young swineherd, brings in the roasted pig on a platter and sets it on the table.*

EUMÆUS

[*Continuing.*

Be sure, good father, I know well thou'rt not
One of those arch impostors who at times
With lying tales of our great lord's return
Strive here to play the idle parasite.
Take what is offered thee and be refreshed.
Thou whisperest — what?

ODYSSEUS

First let me think; then tell me:
What is the truth?

EUMÆUS

He who perverts it knows
And he who tells it wholly knows no less.

Odysseus

Then am I held in a cleft that's made of truth
And falsehood, headlong over an abyss.
No more!

[*To* Leucone.

I thank thee. He returns no more.

[*He begins to eat greedily.* Leucone *goes into the adjoining chamber from which she watches.*

Eumæus

Thou sayest too much, even thou, I know, canst not
Know aught or of Odysseus or his ways:
Yet the mere words thou speakest — though empty sound —
Give a new wound to my despairing heart,
And thou wouldst not reward kindness with wounds.
What is a name to thee, even though it be
That of our king? Whether he be alive,
Or dead and unreturning. Let it rest.

Odysseus

[*Striking the table, cries out.*

Then bury him twelve fathoms deep in earth!

Eumæus

[*Astonished.*

Whom?

Odysseus

Well, that king of yours!

Eumæus

Whom?

ODYSSEUS

Ay, himself!
Away with him, if it be but the name
That scares you. Hide him deep in earth — forgotten!

EUMÆUS

Odysseus' name is fearful to his foes,
Not unto us.

ODYSSEUS

Yet it seems so.

EUMÆUS

Thou errest.
What knowest thou of Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS

This, naught else:
To name him at his board is dangerous.

EUMÆUS

Ay, at the board where the wild wooers sit
Who strive, imperious, for Penelope's hand,
The palace board of riotous gluttony —
There it is fearful. But thou errest thinking
That any name sounds sweeter in our ears.
But we are weary of waiting — twenty years! —
Weary of hopeless waiting, and the name
Of him, our venerated chief, recalls
The barren sorrow of our long despair.

ODYSSEUS

And were he to return?

EUMÆUS

Old man, forget not
The food before thee. Let it be. Why dost thou
Pierce me with such stern glances? Who art thou?

ODYSSEUS

A poor blind beggar, master — nothing else.

EUMÆUS

If thou art blind how canst thou glance so?

ODYSSEUS

Yet
With this same glance did I subdue a god.

EUMÆUS

What god didst thou subdue?

ODYSSEUS

The same whose light
Was quenched thereafter in my darkening soul.

EUMÆUS

O poor, poor victor!

[TELEMACHUS *enters just as he has disembarked.*

Telemachus! Thou?
Is't thou in truth?

TELEMACH

In very truth!

EUMÆUS

'Tis thou
O dearly lovèd son; thou'rt safe and whole.

Telemach

So truly as the sea returned me.

Odysseus

[*Springing up in a kind of ecstasy.*
A god!

Eumæus

A god to us! Well mayest thou say he is
A god.

Telemach

Telemach only. Where is Leucone, friend?

Eumæus

Ah, let me look on thee, belovèd one,
So sorely yearned for! May the gods protect me:
A boy thou wentest, comest back — a man.

Telemach

'Tis well. A man! We need him in this land.
Oh, may the seeming not deceive you, like
The beggar whose wild eyes still stare at me.
Let me not vex thee, old man; rest thee still.

Odysseus

[*Sits down again trembling.*
A god.

Telemach

No god, dear man; only a mother's son.

Eumæus

Oh, if, instead of thee who standest here
Odysseus' self, thy father had fared home —

Art thou not both? Doth he not live in thee? —
No greater the delight were of my heart.
[*He embraces* Telemach.
But tell me: How didst thou escape the spies?

Telemach

We landed at the promontory. There
I landed, my companions sailed around
The island to the harbor.

Eumæus

This, my son,
Did some immortal counsel.

Telemach

Nay, my heart.

Eumæus

Then of that farm I must no more complain
That from the ship and to Nereiton drew thee,
Since it has saved thee from a certain death!
Ah, evil plotters, let your oar-locks creak,
Your yard-arms groan with labour! He is here!
He has escaped your net, is safe at home.

Telemach

How is it in the city since I went?

Eumæus

More wretched than the day thou put'st to sea.
How should it not? Since thou art gone, those princes
Who by themselves are wooers called, and are
Wild revellers and robbers, watch the peaks
The gleaming peaks of Hellas with distrust.

And as we, daily hoping, seek the snow
Upon Taygetus' top with yearning eyes,
So sought they it with fear but ill concealed.
For might not come from thence, at any hour,
Avengers of their guiltiness which now
Through thee was known in the Hellenic lands?
But they redoubled their wild revelry,
And heaped up shame and violence and ill:
Woe to the peasant, to the vintner, herdsman,
That did with wife and children not subdue
His wishes to their boundless, tireless lusts!
Bringest thou help to us, O Telemach?

TELEMACH

None but the help that these two hands can give.
No keel, no sail, no prow follows me here,
Save those that fared with me in ocean. Or,
Perchance thou wilt esteem a cargo of
Light promises a host of Myrmidons.

ODYSSEUS

[*Strikes the table as though in madness.*
Slay me a fatted swine! Then sacrifice,
And feast until the dawn come! I, the lord,
Command that ye shall kill the beast and eat!

EUMÆUS

With madness, lord, the gods have cursed this man.

TELEMACH

Get me a frugal meal. The thought disgusts me
To imitate the gluttons in the palace.

EUMÆUS

That is not wisely acted, O my dear one.
The servant who shall recognise his master

Demands a goodly feast on happy days.
And therefore the poor beggar's mad command
Shall be to me to-day above thine own.
There comes my grandchild. Ye can spare me now.
I shall myself prepare the good we need.

[Leucone *approaches with some hesitancy from the adjoining room, while* Eumæus *passes out at the right into the yard.*

Leucone

Can I then trust mine eyes, O Telemach?
Is it thyself?

Telemach

Has dwelling in strange lands
So changed me that I am strange even to you?

Leucone

Ay, thou are changed. Also the soul that's torn
Suddenly from the darkness of despair
Lacks faith in sudden glory of the light.

Telemach

Yet I am Telemach whom thou didst counsel
Unto the voyage which is safely passed.

Leucone

And did not ships with full sails cross thy path,
Bristling with men and weapons, when ye passed
The isle of Asteris upon your way?

Telemach

I shunned the island.

Leucone

Then a god gave thee
Protection! The same god who sped thee forth,
Brought thee safe home amid the murderous swords.
For I must warn thee that they seek thy life,
The wooers all, foremost Antinoos,
And seek it openly and without shame,
Since thou didst set out on thy voyage. Day
And night they lie in wait upon the sea,
Sleepless with their alternate sentinels.

Telemach

Fear then no more. I am safe. Upon that day
When in the council of the folk I begged
In vain for ship and men and the salt words —
Bitterer than brine — of all the wooers were poured
Out over me, the boy — upon that day
My new found manhood was in sorry plight.
I came to thee. We sacrificed unto
The fountain's nymph. Then we descended far
Unto the sounding shore and dipped our hands
In the grey flood of ocean, praying both
Unto Athena, and she heard our prayer.
For straight thy soul was filled with steady light.
Thou spakest unforgetable words: "Oh take,
What the empty chatterers refuse to give.
Odysseus' name is not an empty sound:
Odysseus' son is not a figment vain."
Oh, I have learned that he is not, in truth.
Thou spakest further: "The lion's seed is still
A lion. Be thyself and show thy claws!
No man will venture to oppose thee then."
And I have worked my work and first my soul
Strove unto thee. Now my companions sail

Without me, around the cape, into the sound
And the great harbour. For I left them, went
Upon the promontory and climbed to thee.
To thee — ere any other eye should gaze
In mine, or any other face should meet
My glance and in the stead of refuge sweet
Oppose the blankness of the fields of death.
Why art thou full of horror? Why showest thou
Fear, not that courage bright thou gavest me?
Be joyous, maiden, for I know as I
Have always known: This is a combat keen
For life or death; no game! Thus shall it be!
High is my courage, fearless is my heart.
How fares my mother?

LEUCONE

When she learned that thou
Hadst secretly voyaged upon the sea . . .

TELEMACH

Hush! Strange ears hear us, I forgot that there
The beggar lies.

LEUCONE

He has fallen into sleep.
So when thy mother learned that thou hadst put
Secretly out to sea without farewell,
She would believe it not. But when at last
She knew that it was true a great fear shook her.
She spake not, hid herself; her maid-servants
Heard how she wept. Reproachfully she called
The ancient Euryclea, beat her breast,
And threatened them with heavy punishment
Who had, perchance, known of thy secret plan.

TELEMACH

Tell me how many days had passed ere she
Asked for her son?

LEUCONE

Four.

TELEMACH

Gladly had I spared
Thee the discomfort, mother, of recalling
Even on the fifth day the poor son whose life
Is more a burden than a joy to thee.
Let me not speak thereof. 'Tis well with her
And with her wooers, I trust, whom father Zeus
Preserves unto my vengeance and their doom.
Why moans the old man in his sleep?

LEUCONE

I know not.
But fragile is his life that in the storms
Of fate flickers and may go out to-day.

TELEMACH

And this, behold, is my far faring's gain:
By ancient Nestor's hearth and in the land
Of mighty Menelaos, aye, even more
In struggle with wave and wind I grew — myself.
Out in the world I found that which I am.
And more I learned: to tell the thing that is
From what is not, the duty from the shame,
And marked what is no more to be endured.
I saw the goal and saw the way and saw
The deed which unescapably awaits
My hands, no other's, a deed that shall avenge
With bloody stroke my father and myself,

Also my mother, her not least of us,
For shame is put upon her through the years
By her wild wooers' revelry and crime.

Leucone

What knowledge of thy father brought'st thou home?

Telemach

That he was godlike! Here on Ithaca
Men bite their lips in wretched silence when
His lofty name resoundeth through the halls,
And shrug their shoulders and turn to their neighbours
In pity, and in doubt. And when my mother
Recounts his praise, the faces of the men
Jeer silently and in their stillness lies
Indulgence for a woman's weaknesses.
Thus is it here where once the rocky ground
Brought forth Odysseus, the incomparable.
Inured to shame and dull-souled is this race
That tills our earth, and envious of the bright
Radiance and fame of the Olympian,
Thinking of naught but how to quench its lust
And sate its greed in his own bed and wealth.
In the great world it is not so. Mighty
His shadow in men's song. Heroical
In music of all harps in royal halls!
Ay, so magnificently the minstrel's song
Glorified him, that fear upon me came
And quietly in mine own mind I weighed
If I were truly of his blood divine.

Leucone

And of what mind are the strange princes now?
Shall we still hope?

Telemach

That he return, perchance,
Unto his homeland? Nay! Longer to hope
Were blasphemy. He is dead. The gods desire not
That man beseeching the impossible
Recall to them the limits of their power.
And it is well for him he lives no more
Far from his native land; such misery
The gods inflict not on their favourites
Enduringly. What he, the godlike man
Has suffered, only now I fathom it.
For when the rocky shore of Ithaca
Was lost in the great sea, then from my breast
For the first time the cry leapt forth: My father!
In shadow of his sorrow I understood
His mighty, incommunicable pain:
It wakened in my soul and drove the tears
Into my eyes. Then, then first was he near
My spirit, he, the stranger whom my mother
Calleth my father, and his mighty soul
Enveloped me — weeping, my father's soul.
It stayed with me. In the deep night when I
Clung to the oar and when with mountainous surge
The billows rolled beneath our fragile ship,
My father's breath did touch me and I felt
A soft caress as from a ghostly hand
Upon my brow and shoulders, and my heart
Throbbed with a blessèd sense mysterious,
With courage high, and spake within me thus:
Thou art my son, no orphan evermore!
And when our prow turned toward home, behold
His spirit flew before. The grating dull
Against the shore, the hour I landed, seemed

A greeting from him in the world below
Returning home and yearning for this land.

Thine own shall come to thee, O father. He
To whom the azure of the boundless sea,
Radiant as the cloudless fields of heaven,
Seems sweeter than a meadow filled with flowers
Or forest rustling on Nereiton's peak —
He knows not the fell guile of the blue-locked
Poseidon, god of the sea. Let him consider
That all the splendour of the cruel sea
To him dying of thirst would equal not
One cupful dipped from Arethusa. Father,
I bid thee welcome home. Oh, thou shalt dwell
In shimmering palaces of gleaming stone
Drenched in the light, after I have duly built
Thy memoried mound and poured the sacrifice
To quench thy thirst! And thou shalt drink of all
The holy fountains of this bounteous land
Draughts of sweet water and of sweeter wine —
And the black blood of rams, and what avails
More even than these — the blood of all thy foes.

ODYSSEUS

[*Jumps up and stands with a mad gesture before* TELEMACH.

Here! Ha! Bury me straight! I am Odysseus!

LEUCONE

Darest thou degrade the hero with mad ways?

TELEMACH

Let be, Leucone! He disgusts me. Come.

[TELEMACH *and* LEUCONE *withdraw.*

JOHN

Excuse me, Braun, but I. . . . Perhaps another time I'll be able to take it from you better than to-day.

[*Exit on to the verandah, where he is seen doing Swedish gymnastic exercises.*

[BRAUN *rises, looks embarrassed, laughs pointlessly.*

KITTY

[*Standing at her work-table.*] You have hurt him, Mr. Braun.

BRAUN

[*With an embarrassed laugh, brusquely.*] It can't be helped. I have a deadly hatred of all compromise.

KITTY

[*After a pause.*] You misjudge him.

BRAUN

In what way?

KITTY

I can't tell you. . . . I am not able to express myself. But anyhow . . . John's struggles are genuine.

BRAUN

When did he begin to be so dreadfully irritable again, I should like to know?

KITTY

He has been so ever since we had to arrange about the baptism. I was beginning to be so happy . . . then that unsettled him again altogether.

And yet it's nothing but a form. Were we for the sake of that to make his old parents utterly miserable? . . . no, cerainly not. Just think of them — these pious, strictly orthodox people. You must see yourself that it could not be helped, Mr. Braun.

JOHN

[*Opens the glass-door and calls in.*] Good people, I was rather ill-tempered. Cheer up! We're all right again. [*Exit into garden.*

BRAUN

You big old idiot!

[*Pause.*]

KITTY

He is really touching sometimes, poor John!

[*Pause.*]

[*Enter old* VOCKERAT *and* PASTOR KOLLIN *noisily from the study.* VOCKERAT *is upwards of sixty. Grey hair, red beard, freckled face and hands. Strong and broad-shouldered, inclining to stoutness. He has begun to stoop and walks with short steps. Overflowing with affection and friendliness. Cheerful, simple, optimistic temperament.* PASTOR KOLLIN, *old man of seventy-three; wears a skull-cap and takes snuff.*

VOCKERAT

[*Leading in the* PASTOR *by the hand, speaking in a soft, slightly husky voice.*] Many, many thanks, my dear sir! Our best thanks for your

Odysseus

[*Strikes the table in the midst of the laughter.*
Oh, slay and eat! Oh, slay and eat!

Euryclea

[*Frightened.*
Who is
That man, Eumæus?

Eumæus

No one! Take him to be
No one, for that's the measure of the man.

Euryclea

Where carrion lies soon will the vultures flock.
These ragamuffins! Were I king and lord
In Ithaca I'd place me poisoned bites,
Or with the hounds drive forth this beggar folk
Into the sea. No danger of such rule!
I am a helpless aged woman. No man
Reigns in the land. The son and heir has gone
The father's way. Zeus knows and he alone
Where Telemach and his father rot together.
O mighty one, Odysseus!
[*To* Eumæus.
Woe to thee, too,
Thou faithless servant, when the master comes!

Eumæus

[*With simple sincerity.*
Ah, he is welcome!

Odysseus

Ay, the horse-dealer who
In trickery is master of us all:

Nimble in all thieves' cunning, well experienced
In cowardly slyness — hardened, brazen, shrewd —
Bring him and make him prince and king and lord
Of the rogue's guilds in Ithaca!

EURYCLEA

[*Rushes up to him.*
Thou ventest
Thy venom on the king, and no one beats
And thwacks and drives thee as is thy desert!

ODYSSEUS

Ah, No one beats me! No one beats me here!
[*He strikes his own head.*

EUMÆUS

He is beside himself, mad. Mark him not.

EURYCLEA

Who is it?

ODYSSEUS

No one!

EURYCLEA

Art thou no one?

ODYSSEUS

Ay!
Thou knowest me. I am No one, daughter of Ops.

EURYCLEA

He makes me shudder!

Eumæus

Having eaten and drunk,
He grows a burden.

Odysseus

[*As though in fear of pursuit.*
Room! Oh, give me room!
Leave me!

Eumæus

Whither away? What troubles thee?

Odysseus

Eh, ye would steal upon the beggar's sleep.
Murderer!
[*He runs to the rear and disappears.*

Euryclea

Support me, friend. Who hurts him? Who?
My blood runs cold. I am old. I have often seen
Men slay each other. Never yet heard I
A cry by which my soul was riven so.

Eumæus

I have heard sorer in my time, old nurse.
What brings thee to us?

Euryclea

I have come for news
Of Telemach. My mistress sends me. She
Beats her poor breasts and weeps and scolds, because
Men are deceiving her.

Eumæus

Who is 't deceives her?

EURYCLEA

Thou and her wooers and her maids and all!
And now at last even her own son. Speak not
For Telemach! He'd slay his mother! Ay!
Slay her through fear and consternation. Is that
A kind son's way? Oh, may some god forgive him
His thoughtlessness. All secretly he speeds
Away, alone, unchildlike! No farewell!
Boards him a ship and goes in the dark night.
He needs a father! What this wayward boy
Wants is a vigorous father's heavy hand.

EUMÆUS

And art thou done, O Euryclea?

EURYCLEA

Nay!
Heaven knows I climbed not hither unto thee
And to thy swine to rasp my throat with words.
Thou and thy swine surely are less to me
Than Telemachos and his mother. Thou art
The base betrayer of thy youthful lord.
Strive not to darken council! Didst not thou
Secretly aid his plan? Didst not provide
Him ship and men and pilot for his ship?
And to what end but to be rid of him?

EUMÆUS

Wise in thine own conceit?

EURYCLEA

Eh? Have I not
Eyes that can see, ears that can hear? Did I not,
Also Melanteus the goatherd meet?

Eumæus

Melanteus, of all men?

Euryclea

Surely I met him
Climbing the hills to visit thee, his friend.

Eumæus

Not light are thy reproaches! Yet didst thou
Send us Melanto, that vile, common wench,
To be a sting and weariness to us?
Now comes the goatherd, that repulsive wight,
To speak with her. Is that so strange seeing
She is the daughter of the wily wretch?
By Zeus, but thou must change thy tune, old friend.
And Telemach has safe returned to us.
And there has come a man and a strong lord
And not the youth who, one short month ago,
Put forth his ship to sea. Therefore I bid thee
Spare violent words and rest content with us.

Euryclea

My dream! My dream of the dark night come true!
Lead me to him that I may see and touch him.

[Melanto *has approached, listening with bold curiosity.*

Melanto

Is't true thou metst my father?

Eumæus

What wouldst thou?

MELANTO

Naught, master. Only hear if I heard right.

EUMÆUS

Work, woman, and put wax into thine ears.

MELANTO

One likes to hear what it is well to know.

EUMÆUS

Then know that righteousness toward thee would mean
A stone about thy neck and casting thee
In ocean for thy evil deeds and tongue.

MELANTO

[*Laughs jeeringly.*
The chiefs of the princes think not as thou dost,
And will decree that punishment for others.
Until that time I'll use my patience here.
Oh, if the wooers knew what here is done.

EURYCLEA

Art thou not tamed yet, O thou void of shame,
Who in the very palace of the king
Didst practice evil with the sons of sloth,
To every stranger's lust a willing thing,
Betraying the holy hearth that nourished thee?
Does not thy heart smite thee now that our mistress
Has chosen so mild a punishment for thee?

MELANTO

Is then the queen so chaste with all her rout
Of maddened princes and wild younglings there

Who day and night are noisy in her house?
Lies on the threshold of her chamber door
The hundred headed hound of hell to watch?
And in these hills does Telemach otherwise
Delight him with a serf and lowly maid
Than did Eurymachos, the hero, if
Reports are true and he kissed me indeed?

[Melanto *laughs and returns to the adjoining chamber in the rear. The old* Laertes, *indistinguishably like* Odysseus *in his beggar's guise, has sat down unnoticed on the place which the latter left.*

Eumæus

Since she is here the foe is in my house.
And when the day of bloody reckoning comes,
Not as the last must she to Orcus fare.

Euryclea

[*Observes* Laertes *and is startled.*
He has come back.

Eumæus

Who?

Euryclea

Oh, a horror shakes me.
What would the stranger with his stealthy ways?

Eumæus

Thou errest. 'Tis Laertes.

Laertes

Who calls me?

Eumæus

Thy servant bids thee welcome, O dear lord.

Laertes

Cook me an oatmeal porridge! Hearest thou?
An oatmeal porridge, swineherd, ay, that's it.

Eumæus

This is a sacred hour, lord, for to-day
Thy grandson has come home. Thy meal must be
Fitting; a festive board have we prepared
To celebrate our Telemach's return.

Laertes

Ay, 'tis the porridge. Right so. Cook me quick
The oatmeal porridge, swineherd!

Eumæus

O my dear
Old lord, akin once to the very gods,
Father of him, the much-proved wanderer
Whom men Odysseus call, the wrathful one.
I knew him well. I knew his wrath that once
Awakened was not sated but by blood.
Art thou without protection? Is there no one
To knead thee in the bath and clothe thy limbs
In regal garb. Are not Penelope's chambers
Fulfilled of costly raiment?

Laertes

Eh, Eumæus
Thou art to cook an oatmeal porridge straight.

Euryclea

And do they let thee want, O venerable,
Grey father? Was it ever heard before?

A wealthy prince in rags! Oh, if thy son
Would but return and straight avenge thee!

LAERTES

Who
Is this woman, Eumæus?

EUMÆUS

It is Euryclea.

LAERTES

Is't thou, O Euryclea, daughter of Ops?
[*Sobbing,* EURYCLEA *kisses his feet.*
Is it not passing strange, Eumæus? Look!
This woman once was young! And still more strange!
I, too, was young in far days! Both of us,
She and myself — we were once young i' the world.
I had no son then, nor my son a wife
Busy weaving my shroud for me, nor yet
A grandson Telemach. I had been born
Into the world and laughed. And there was she!
With garments girded even to the sweet thighs
Did she prepare my bath. And think, likewise,
That all the bitter enemies who now
Crowd our dear island, and the swarms of men
Who come to harbour from ships great and small —
That they were all unborn. And unborn were
The beasts and men who rage here now. And also,
Knowest thou why I, who so yearned after thee,
(Thou yearning equally to be possessed)
Did not embrace all thy young loveliness,
O ancient Euryclea, daughter of Ops?
[*Laughing in senile forgetfulness.*

I know it not! Now are we old and toothless!
And thou and I — we play with love no more! . . .
Cook me an oatmeal-porridge, swineherd! Go!

THE THIRD ACT

Inside of the yard of Eumæus' *farmstead. The yard is surrounded by block-houses, which serve the needs of the household, and by tall fences. Toward the sea the farm is unfortified because it lies upon a mountain height and is inaccessible from the shore. In the background a strong gate of wood which is barricaded; in the middle of the yard a well which is now dry. Not far from it stands* Melanto *and stirs blood in a pot of earthenware.*

The dwelling house stands at the left. Next to the door is a stationary bench.

Upon this bench crouches feebly the beggar Odysseus. Laertes, *who is now the counterpart of* Odysseus *in every way comes from the house and sits down next to him.*

Laertes

Thou bathest thee i' the sun! Wilt thou not leave
A little space also for me, good comrade?

Odysseus

[*Leaps up, trembling.*
Zeus be with me! Who art thou?

Laertes

I have eaten
Of oatmeal porridge! Hee, hee! May be thou

Wouldst like some oatmeal porridge too, good comrade?

Odysseus

Hast thou naught better?

Laertes

Nay, I want naught better.

Odysseus

O eyes of mine, so dull and blind! Must ye,
Having seen many woes, confess at last
That ye have seen no thing unto this day?

Laertes

What murmurest thou, comrade! Let us chat!

[Odysseus *sits down again beside* Laertes.

Odysseus

What are they busy with beyond there?

Laertes

One
Cleaneth a swine, and the maid stirreth blood.
That is the custom on our island now.
Greed wastes the forest and the half-ripe fruit,
Greed wastes the blade upon the fields of wheat,
And greed gnaws at the root. Cellar and barn
Swarm with a vermin unescapable,
Even the king's golden house; for also it
Is wasted and picked clean by robbery.
Voracious teeth crush the land's marrow, maws
Insatiable still gorge themselves with it.
Let us prick up our ears, good comrade, let us
Listen unto their speech.

MELANTO

Why do we kill
A swine again to-day?

NOAIMON

Clearly that thou
Mayest not waste away, O head of flame!

MELANTO

Because the foolish people like it not,
I will not stain with smoke my golden hair,
Or shear it as great Hera's sacrifice.

NOAIMON

'Twould be a pity, for a steed like thou
Needs those strong reins for man to govern it.

MELANTO

It may be that that milk-faced Telemach
Escaped once more the punishment that's his,
But wait a little and thou soon wilt see
Who graces the board that has been laid for him.

NOAIMON

Whose favour shall one crave? The choice is hard.

MELANTO

When summer comes, lord of this isle will be
If not Antinoos, yet Eurymachos.
A few there be who hold that even more
Penelope burneth for Ktesippos —
No despicable hero either, he,
A mountain steer, innocent of the yoke.

But I do not believe that she prefers him.
Rather it is the tall Amphinomos:
For often she devours him with a glance
In which her passion flares up like a flame.
And she, the hypocrite, grows red and pale,
And lowers her moist glances to her lap.
She knows the arts of hiding. But who sees
Clearly, sees how her glances wander far.
And more one sees: for aye her traitor lips
Tremble and throb in secret ecstasy,
So that the goddess, cool as marble, glows
And her knees, chastely covered, falteringly
Refuse their service, and open to receive
The arrow of Eros even against their will.
O scarlet flower of passion, all aglow
Beneath concealing snow which doth but seem
To hide the burning summer at its heart.
And woe to him who this false Hera weds.
For love long reined will come upon him, bound
And throttled in this net he will receive
Wound after wound and bleed at last to death.

NOAIMON

But were Odysseus to return, O thou
Flaming-haired demon, tell me, were he not
An aged man? What thinkest thou? Would our mistress
Quench her red glow with him and be content?

MELANTO

Content and quenched? She and an aged man?
Oh, let him come and try! I'll hang myself,
If she delivers him not unto the pack,
And lets her wooers tear him limb from limb!

LAERTES

An evil-hearted wench.

ODYSSEUS

Assuredly.

[*Pretending to be cold and in terror.*

I am afraid! I am afraid!

LAERTES

I, too!

But I know caverns that are full of leaves.
Come with me! We will hide us in the mountains.

ODYSSEUS

It is not true that I am that Odysseus,
And so my wife can chase me not to death
With bloodhounds. Am I right? But if I were,
Father, I would be still as any mouse.

LAERTES

Ha, ha, ha, ha! Thou art my son Odysseus.
Why not, seeing that I am father of the man!
Odysseus' father dwells in these foul rags.
Nay, nay! I lied! Laertes am I not,
And so she whom my son did wed may not
Hunt me with bloodhounds. But if I were he,
I'd do as thou dost and speak not at all.

ODYSSEUS

[*Moans and kisses the face of* LAERTES

LAERTES

What dost thou?

ODYSSEUS

Lo, I kiss my father! Shall I
Not kiss the sacred head I have not seen

For twenty long, intolerable years?
Thrust me not from thee or my heart will burst,
And, terror-stricken, my entrails burn to ashes.

LAERTES

Ay, kiss me then, old comrade, kiss me then.
I have no brother, but thou art like to me.
The gods caused thee to shrivel and the vultures
Of misery to brood upon our heads.
Come, let us babble and hum. Let the half lamed
Tongues of old men babble their folly forth.
Though it sound wooden, I can think of no
Lovelier sound, spite of the Muses all.
Dishonoured aged men delight the gods.
How camest thou hither?

ODYSSEUS

In a pirate-ship's
Void belly I lived through dreadful, dreadful years,
Till I grew old and sick and the oar-slaves
Did cast me forth as strengthless. Then they dragged
Me sleeping hither to this shore of thine.
'T was a strange sleep, old man; it was no less
A wakening as from a thousand deaths.

LAERTES

Not ill thou speakest. But what meanst thou?

ODYSSEUS

I babble as the thought come to my mind,
Knowing not what and void of memory.

LAERTES

They who do so are the gods favourites.
Up, darling of the gods, and let us dance.

NOAIMON

[*Holding his sides with laughter.*
Was ever such thing heard? Two beggars — deaf,
Crooked and stiff, limbs all awry with gout
And age and want, kiss — and at last they dance!

MELANTO

[*Screaming with merriment.*
Never thought I to see such sport. It happened
Never since the beginning of the world.

LAERTES

I dance and I caress thy ancient head.

ODYSSEUS

I do the same to thee, O ancient father.

LAERTES

If but my son could see my well-being!

ODYSSEUS

Woe! Woe!

LAERTES

[*Stops, frightened.*
Why criest thou? Who strikes thee?

ODYSSEUS

Woe!

[NOAIMON *and* MELANTO *have watched the dance of the beggars with loud laughter.*

Odysseus has knelt down before Laertes *and kissed his hands. In the mean time* Melanto *has opened the central gate and admitted her father, the goatherd* Melanteus.

Melanteus

[*A restless, birdfaced fellow with spiteful and malicious eyes.*

An old goat of my flock escaped from me;
I heard him bleating and I find him here.

[*Amid general laughter he plucks* Laertes *by the beard.*

Pent in a cage this curious animal
From Sparta take to Athens! Let him dance
At all the fairs of Hellas as the last
Of all his race. Dance, learn to dance, Laertes!
Dance, thou obscene old goat and tell the men
Who stand about thee gazing, of the brood
Thou once begottest of those spindle loins.

Laertes

How callest thou me? I am not that! Thou liest!
I am not Laertes! I am an old beggar.

Melanteus

Thou hast become a beggar, so take that!

[*He strikes him.*

Eumæus *bearing the bow of* Odysseus *steps from the house as* Laertes *runs away.*

Eumæus

What hath been done?

Odysseus

[*Roars like one possessed.*
My father, O my father!
They have beaten him! They have taken my old father
And beaten him! They have beaten my father! Ah!

[*Fully armed and proud of bearing, the wooers* Antinoos, Amphinomos, Ktesippos *and* Eurymachos *enter the open gate. The most notable in appearance is the thirty-year old* Antinoos; *after him* Eurymachos.

Eumæus

Who of ye serfs against my stern command
Opened the gate?

Noaimon

It was this wench that did it.
[*He points to* Melanto.

Eumæus

Woman, who gave thee leave to do this thing?

Melanto

I heard my father's voice and knew his call.

Eumæus

My call and not thy father's here is law,
Melanto. Take thy pack and go with him!
Follow thy father to that stead where he
Commands.

Melanto

This was long since my wish, and I
Endured this place only by cruel force.

Eumæus

Then all the better.

Melanteus

She will go, O swineherd,
If these, the mighty princes, suffer it.
She bade them enter here with seemlier grace
Than thou, O serf, who deem'st thyself a lord.

Ktesippos

Ay, he's the servant of two bursting corses
Washed by the outer seas.

Eumæus

So let it be,
So and not otherwise, O Ktesippos!
I am content being aught but thy serf.

Melanteus

Did I report too much? Does this old man
Not speak in fearless and in shameless wise,
Weaving with words a noose for his own neck!

Antinoos

Enough. We are but modest guests, O swineherd.
Men say that thou art overwise, canst hear
The very acorns growing and the wheat.
Old women who in the city stir the refuse
For goodly bites forgotten call thee seer
And sacred, say thy daily vision proclaims
The awful ruler of men has come again,

And sees Odysseus landing on the isle,
A thing fit to make babes and sucklings scream.
But now: Ay, look upon me searchingly,
As though I were thy sphinx, O Oedipus
Of swine! For my mysterious questions are:
Knowest thou a man who dares, at dead of night,
Hunt heroes, princes, rulers of men as though
They were mere beasts of the forest?

EUMÆUS

Ay, by Zeus,
Well know I such a man. It is Odysseus.

ANTINOOS

Thou hast guessed wrongly, excellent Oedipus!

EUMÆUS

Ask then the driven princes after him!

ANTINOOS

If thou hast vision, why seest thou this not?

EUMÆUS

What wouldst thou that I see, Antinoos?

ANTINOOS

First, then, direct thy seeing eyes on me.

EUMÆUS

I do it not gladly but may not refuse.

ANTINOOS

What seest thou written on my brow, O herd?

Eumæus

If I were wise in reading, I would know.

Antinoos

Thy sentence, swineherd! Ay, thy death and doom!
If Zeus should make me ruler over ye,
I swear it by Styx! Hearest thou? Thou shalt swing!

Eumæus

I too shall hang thee once the lordship's mine.
[*The wooers burst out into forced laughter.*

Eurymachos

Antinoos, thy foe is witty.

Ktesippos

Knowest thou
What shall I do with thy old core, swineherd,
When I am lord here?

Eumæus

Nay, how should I know?

Ktesippos

I'll cry command: cast it before the swine!

Eumæus

Thou criest too much, Ktesippos, and too many
Cry out on thee. Spare thy voice yet awhile.

Eurymachos

Only remains for thee to know, O swineherd,
What I, being ruler here, shall ask of thee,

Thou mayest remain my friend, I'll give thee
gold —
Thou'lt give thy grandchild as my concubine.

Amphinomos

Aha, where is that miracle of thine,
That nymph that will not let thee sleep?

Ktesippos

Even here.

[Leucone *carrying an urn of water on her shoulder crosses the courtyard.*

Odysseus

[*With the terror of a madman throws himself at her feet.*
O thou walking aloft, great sorceress,
Terrible goddess Circe, thou who changest
Into mere swine all whom thy magic lures,
Have pity upon the princes.

Ktesippos

This beggarman
Is mad.

Leucone

Alas, he speaks the truth, O princes.
But for this thing, that I am not the goddess,
Only the lofty lady's maiden — hers
Who has changed the Ithacans so fatally.

Antinoos

Behold the goddess in her anger. Did
Dædalus ever or anyone create
Of ivory and gold a form like hers?

ODYSSEUS

[*With senile business runs to* ANTINOOS
and presses something into his hand.
Take this, O hero, swiftly and save thyself.

ANTINOOS

What would the childish old man?

ODYSSEUS

Close thy hand
And hold fast what thou hast and what I have
Given, O prince.

EURYMACHOS

What gave he thee?

ANTINOOS

[*Shows his empty hand.*
There — naught!

ODYSSEUS

It was the herb called Moly which once Hermes
The divine messenger did give me who
With golden staff greeted me on Aeæa.
This is the isle of Circe, whose mother was
Perse, whose father was Oceanos!
The goddess' stables are full of swine who were
Great heroes once. Only the small herb Moly
Saved me from being equal to them in fate.
Give heed and ear, O heroes, also here
Resounds her loom. Fear then the sacred weaver's
Alluring song and draught of poisoned honey.
[LEUCONE *has passed the scene and disappeared.*

EURYMACHOS

Right art thou, O Antinoos, thou wouldst
Assume the inheritance of Telemach
Ere thou assumest what Odysseus left.

ANTINOOS

By Zeus almighty, my Eurymachos,
Thus shall it be. If ever she become
Thy concubine, I'll feed on Circe's grunters.

EUMÆUS

Wash lips and hands, O men, there is the jug
For cleansing.

AMPHINOMOS

That Pallas of thine bore
Swines' stomach and intestines
Across the courtyard!

KTESIPPOS

Pay thy court to her.
For that boy Telemach will not again
Warm her lone bed. The slain are but cold friends.

MELANTEUS

The swineherd knows this not. The boatmen crouch
Upon the strand, peer o'er the sea, await
His body floating, circled o'er by vultures.

ODYSSEUS

[*Calls.*
Be wise, O friend, and give thy grandchild straight
As concubine to Antinoos the king.

Eumæus

He alone shall be king who bends this bow,
None other: 'tis the strong bow of Odysseus.
To him who bends him I myself will bow,
But to none other in the world.

Antinoos

'Tis well.
We are weary, swineherd, and would eat — naught else.
Thy wine and bread are good, Melanteus says.
Thou wouldst refuse us neither surely.

Eumæus

Zeus
Forbid! Nor unto you, nor to this beggar here.

Ktesippos

Let us go in to Telemach's funeral feast.

[*The wooers enter the dwelling house. With them* Melanteus *and* Eumæus, *who carries the bow of* Odysseus.

Odysseus

[*Calls out after them.*
I counsel ye: take the herb Moly too!

[*Gazing after them with fixed look, his attitude becomes threatening: he seems to grow in stature. The slaughtered swine is carried off by* Noaimon *and other men-servants. By a door, opposite to that through which the wooers have gone, enter* Telemach *and* Leucone.

TELEMACH

[*Catches sight of* ODYSSEUS *who turns his back to him.*

Who is this man?

LEUCONE

A stranger. Nay, the beggar
Who, but an hour ago, disturbed thy mood.

[ODYSSEUS, *aware that he is observed, lets himself shrink into the beggar again.*

TELEMACH

'Tis true. Mine eyes dazzle. Almost I saw
A Heracles in this poor fellow's rags.
Thy message has perturbed my grieving soul.

LEUCONE

[*Holding his hand soothingly.*

O Telemach, a soul perturbed works ill.
Stay! Go not in the hall to meet those men;
For they are feigning thou art lost and drowned.
Perchance false news misleads them. Yet, who knows?
Their eyes are full of treachery and fear.

TELEMACH

When in my mother's hall in time now past,
Before I went to Sparta, I beheld
The wooers — among wolves I was a lamb.
Now I hate all, as doth the wolf the lamb.
I go. Let them behold that I still live.

LEUCONE

Although thou be a wolf, these are not lambs.
Thy father was Athena's darling. Be

Still mindful of the goddess and of him
Who in disguise and cunning was a master.

Telemach

And why climbed they the hills unto your house?

Leucone

To learn this let us practice patience now.

Telemach

No more of patience! Is it not enough
That these fell hounds defile my father's house
And void their rheum upon its pictured walls?
It is enough, the evil that they do;
That in the royal palace of my sire,
Belovèd, sacred and incomparable,
The shame of all our race is blended with
The offal of their bodies thrice accursed,
And drips from holy columns of the hall.
O unendurable ill! If I but see
Afar that radiant and dishonoured roof,
A madness seizes me, the bitter gall
Throttles me; black with grief and throbbing rage
I see the world. No more! No more! Speak not
Of patience unto me. I have suffered much.
I will go in. I will go in and slay.
They shall not lie upon my track, they shall not
Seek out my scent as though I were a deer,
Or dig into my hiding place as though
I were a badger!

[*He rushes forward.*

ODYSSEUS

[*Bars his way.*
Seest thou not behind thee
The admonishing goddess bright?

TELEMACH

Who art thou, man?
And who the goddess that thou seest?

ODYSSEUS

Her
Who sprang full-armed from the broad head of Zeus.

LEUCONE

Hold not this man's monition of no worth,
O dearest one! Confused by age and grief,
Yet is he stirred at times by impulses
Of holy madness, seeing the face of gods.

ODYSSEUS

Yea, I see gods walking upon the earth.

TELEMACH

Art thou beyond thy seeming? If thou art
A seer whom the master that he served
Cast forth for evil presage — speak thy name!
Art thou a friend of the gods? Then be mine too.

ODYSSEUS

Oh, call me No one, boy, for I am No one.

TELEMACH

Thou art not No one, nor am I a boy.
Then go thy way.

Odysseus

No one slew Polyphemus!
No one is wily as thy father was.

Telemach

Zeus light this madman's mind.

Odysseus

May he do so,
In truth, the ruler of gods and men!

Telemach

And mine!

Odysseus

The minds of father and son, O Telemach!

Telemach

[*Involuntarily, struck by the voice of the beggar.*]
Who calls?

Odysseus

Why dost thou shrink and start,
When No one calls? Because in secret thoughts
Thou hast betrayed this No one. Thou wouldst rule!
Thou wert a boy when oft this No one called
Thee by thy name and thou madst answer: "Father!"
What glittered in thy eyes but murder when
Thou spokest of his death. But No one lives!
He is not dead! He yearns to see again
The goddess and command as in old times
That which is his by right. And this same No one

Loves thee! And like thine own his tongue doth
cleave,
Dry with great bitterness unto his throat,
The while, like thee, he marks his house's shame
Deep in his heart. Black murder hurtles o'er
This No one's head. Give thou his bow to him
Which no one bends but No one; he will choose
So many arrows and dip them in the black,
Foul blood of lecherous men as there are now
Wooers about thy mother in the palace.

Telemach

Who art thou?

Odysseus

One who is desperate. Farewell!

Telemach

Remain! Or go! Go, and return no more.

Odysseus

Ay, boy, thou art right. Thrust me in the abyss!
Why not, in truth? Is not the round o' the earth
Narrow enough for those who live? Is not
Most precious every span of the good mould
The sun god kisses? What were left of earth
Did once the hemmed in flood of the dark world
Of Styx and Acheron pour over it
Its unimaginable sea of dead?
By Acheron, there let them rest, the dead.
For there they lie, heaped to the very moon
Which with a flickering light abominable
And full of fear lights faintly hill and dale
Lifeless, void even of a vulture's wing!
There is my place and no one strives with me.

Telemach

[*To* Leucone.

Go, lass, and leave me with this man alone.

[*Walking slowly backwards,* Leucone *withdraws.*

Telemach

[*Continuing.*

When first I saw thee, I was inly moved
Half by compassion, half by horror too.
The road's filth clings to thee, thine eyes protrude
From red-rimmed hollows and thine eye-brows are
Bushy and grey with dust. Thy beard grown wild
Has been unshorn for many, many years.
Thy rags scarce cover thee, thy body is
Emaciated with hunger and with sickness,
And bent by age. And the words of thy mouth
Are stammering. A wheezing, whistling breath
Forces its way from thine old breast. Thou starest
Into the air grinning or blind of soul;
And now again thou bleatest like a beast,
Reft of all sense, possessed, degraded, bound
By madness in deep, incurable, black night.
But suddenly at times it seems to me
That thou art neither helpless, old nor poor,
That from the inmost places of thy soul
Beckons some mystic good — a wisdom breaks,
A truth through the delusion and the snares
Which meet mine eye and fill me with disgust.
And therefore, if thou hast a word to speak,
Speak it! If messages are thine, proclaim them!
For of this island I am king and lord
Strong to command and to protect thee too.

Odysseus

If of this island thou art king and lord,
I am a beggar truly, unless thou
Wilt swathe me in thy purple, and wilt seat me
Upon that golden chair which is thy throne.
O Telemach, from that exalted seat
Truly would I arise in godlike ire,
Arise and stretch myself and stand revealed
In argent armour clanging death and doom,
As the avenger — called Odysseus once.
Why dost thou tremble?

Telemach

[*Pale.*
'Tis thy madness, friend,
That dares assume my father's sacred might.
And also at that hero whose high fame
Unreachable did strike thine eyes with blindness
And shook the firm foundations of thy soul.

Odysseus

My fame is the possession of strange men,
O Telemach, friend of his fame, and not
Of him, thy father! But thou are too young
To know what fame is in this world, what are
A man and a man's fate by gods assigned,
And how the world, the gods must change for him,
And how the world, the gods must change him too,
Ere he is ripe for death that draweth nigh.
I tell thee, if thy father came again,
Thou wouldst not know him and not recognise.

Telemach

The first glance of mine eyes would know him straight.

Odysseus

I swear to thee by Zeus, thou wouldst not see,
Not hear thy father, though he stood before thee
Even as I do now and spake with thee.

Telemach

And I swear also by the Thunderer
That I would know him at the slightest word
That his lips uttered!

Odysseus

[*With a dreadful smile.*
Yet thou knowest me not?
[Leucone *returns.*

Leucone

I could not stay afar from thee; thou must
Learn of the miracle which came to pass
Even while thou wert speaking with our guest.
Certain it is: he brings us good, not ill.
For months have passed since a great drouth laid waste
The soil upon our isle; the hollow bed
Of rivers is dry dust strewn by the winds.
Naught but some sparing, hidden rill hath run.
Also this farmstead, waterless so long,
Was hard put to it with its multitude
Of men and beasts tormented by grim thirst.
Suddenly gushes and sparkles all about
Through every runlet the crystalline stream,
And even this trough of stone doth overflow.
Here too the life-giving wells awaken! Look!
[*She points out to* Telemach *the well which is beginning to flow mightily.*

About thirty shepherds, serfs of Eumaeus, *come hastening in with laughter and loud, happy talk. Without paying attention to anything else they hasten to the well to slake their thirst. Each is eager to drink first; they thrust one another from the well, drink from the spout or from their hollow hands, and in their delight sprinkle one another with water.*

[*Among the shepherds are* Glaukos, Lykurgos, Idomeneus, Hector, Lamon, Dryas, Euphorion.

[Noaimon *and* Melanto *join them.*

Lykurgos

The nymphs have hastened on, far, far ahead.
Behold how here the cool well gushes forth.

Dryas

This is a miracle indeed, O youth.
'Tis true, for days above Nereiton's peaks
Rumbled Kronion's thunder, but till now
No drop of water fell from the hot blue
Or sickered from the skeleton of earth.

Noaimon

Who called me hither, youths, unto this place?

Lykurgos

The sacred nymphs who guard the well — none else.

Dryas

A voice did call me in the wood below
And bade me fare unto this spot.

Euphorion

Me too.

Idomeneus

The self-same voice did bring me to this place.

Lamon

O shepherds, while afar among my boars
I lay and rested in the vale of pines
The voice ye speak of also called me here.

Melanto

How is't that ye all hasten here at once?

All

Strange as it is to thee, it was to us,
When at the gate suddenly we did meet.

Melanto

Ye prate of voices of invisible ones!
Ye are but flies that scent the butcher's block.

Idomeneus

[*Who has been wandering through the adjoining court-yards now returns. With lifted hands he turns about as in a dance.*

O nymphs! O Pan! Wreathe ivy about your heads.
Eumæus has killed the swine. Out in the orchard
Fragrant it turns upon the glowing spit,
And filled with thyme, the incense smoke ascends.

All

[*Exaltedly.*

O nymphs! O Pan!

DRYAS

Where is another master
Like ours, or one so brave of heart, who shares
All good things with his people, not alone
The bitter toil and sweat.

EUPHORION

[*Places a gnarled piece of wood near the well on an elevation.*

Be thou Priapus!
Come, let us dance, O youths! Let Glaucos put
The flutes unto his lips in honour of Pan,
In honour of the beneficent return
Of the kind nymphs, the daughters of high Zeus.
So that the holy nymphs may know forever
How welcome they unto the meanest are,
And how in piety and kindliness
We dwell forever mindful of their gifts.

ALL

[*Dancing about the rude symbol of Priapus.*
A Priapean song! A song of nymphs!
In honour of Zeus, and of the nymphs and Pan!

LEUCONE

[*To* ODYSSEUS *who is weeping silently.*
Why dost thou weep among the shepherds glad?

ODYSSEUS

Shall not he weep to whom the heavenly powers
Show in a mirror all that he hath lost.
I was like them. My golden homeland gave
Me golden fruits and draughts of golden wine
And golden happiness. Did I, since faring

From that dear land, draw nearer to the gods?
Oh, these live in communion with great Pan
Forever. And they guard their flocks, and he
The shepherds' shepherd hath them in his care.
While the great slaughter raged at Ilion,
There grew this seed of youths on the untouched
Inviolate mountains of the mother isle.
Are they the same that once I dragged afar
To the great battle of men in Asia
And who have risen again like blades of wheat
After the reaper bared the meadows? Nay!
They know me not! The dear companions whom
I thrust into the night return no more.

[*From beyond the court-yard there is heard the soft, long drawn out blowing of a horn. The shepherds interrupt their dance.*

Hector

Hear ye the soft, low music of the horn?

All

What is it? Whither comes he? Me he wakened
At night and frightened me and all my herd:
Now sounded from the earth, now from the clouds.
At times the night, even while his music blew,
Was dipped in sudden, brief and silent light.

Hector

Trust an old swineherd's wisdom. There's no hill
Upon the earth but may Olympus be,
If gods desire it and the wise man see,
Where they may gather and their councils hold.

The immortal messenger flits to and fro.
The cloud thunders, the smoke upon the height
Rises. The swallow circles. The sheep bay
Wolf-like, and in the harbour the Old Man
O' the sea from the salt flood rears his white head.
This happened once before on Ithaca,
Then when Oydsseus our great king fared forth
To Ilion. Ah, he returned no more.
Then did the peasant see Demeter tall
Stride through the unripe corn: saw Pallas lean
Full-armed against the sacred poplar-tree.
Pan raged through the slim pipes even as to-day,
As though the green reed were a shepherd's horn.
And these things have a meaning, be assured.

Odysseus

[*Steps among the shepherds with the gestures of a blind man.*
Shepherds, Apollo robbed me of the light
And drew over mine eyes a horny rind:
But in exchange he gave me second sight.
Hear me! I know and feel what is to come.
It is the horn of the embattled Pan
To whom ye raised a sanctuary high
On Kora cliff. For did ye not yourselves
Give unto Pan the name of warlike there?
Then take your arms. Let each man fetch his spear,
And when Eumæus, who is your master, calls,
Then be prepared and rush upon the foe!

Melanto

Beggarly rogue! Thou scurfy and accursed
Ragged, malodorous, repulsive wretch!
Hasten and get thee gone from this court-yard,

If thou wouldst not that I tear out thy tongue,
Malevolent, cunning, treacherous hound! Oh, they
Shall learn of thy vile plotting, for thou art
A venomous viper. They shall learn from me,
The princes, who do honour to this house
And are even now within. Wait thou! A noose
Is twisted soon enough, and thou shalt swing,
Thou creeping spy, soon from the nearest pear-tree.

Odysseus

Put her in bonds, bind her with thongs! Then cast her
Into a prison impenetrable of light.
And Zeus himself commands ye do this thing.

[*The lightning flashes, and almost simultaneously it thunders. The shepherds bend as under the lash of a whip and do as they are commanded.* Melanto, *paralysed with terror, is dragged away.—The rolling of subterranean thunder.*

Odysseus

Poseidon, dost thou answer that dread god
Who nods and grants my will with lofty brow?
Answerest thou the wielder of the bolt
Defiant with ancient anger from thy depths
With rolling thunder? Dost thou stain the sea
Black in thy powerless rage? Here do I stand,
And care not for thy threat. For on the sea,
Even thy sea, lies Pallas' argent shield
And gleams unto me though the night be dark.
Let the long shoreline thunder, terrible god,
And yellow fumes arise! Roll on, roll on
In bitter, measureless ire thy massive slabs

Of blackish green and ponderous ore and break
them
Even to powdery dust against the cliffs.
I hate thee and I mock thy power from this
Sure promontory which thou canst not devour.
'Tis well! Raise thou thy mountainous waves!
'Tis well,
Thou toothless, envious, ever surging god—
More crone than god! To suffer more I have
Suffered too deep! I am here, whate'er betide.

[*He falls upon his face and remains lying motionless. In the meantime a storm has arisen and gloomy, sulphurous light spreads about. Weak lightning and the mere muttering of thunder. Clouds are formed and move in the sky gigantically like dark and dislimning mountains. Except* Odysseus *only* Telemach *and* Leucone *have remained in the courtyard.*

Telemach

Where is he? Swallowed him the earth?

Leucone

Ah, no!
He prays, it seems, unto the heavenly ones.

Telemach

And does he beg them to wipe out the curses
Which he has uttered here?

Leucone

O Telemach
He is a seer possessed by some high god.
He foams at the mouth and writhes convulsively.

TELEMACH

And earth herself quivers! My head goes round!

LEUCONE

O Telemach, is this no half-god who
Drew lightning on his head?

TELEMACH

Ah woe!

LEUCONE

To whom
The father of the gods did lend his bolt
At mere beseeching?

TELEMACH

Woe! Woe!

LEUCONE

Terrible
Was his rebellion. Yet the spear I hold
Began to glow while his wild words burst forth.
I felt my stature grow, it seemed I wore
Helmet and shield to fight beside him though
'Twere even against gods. So mighty is
His sorrow that it shames the unjust gods.

TELEMACH

Zeus! Wielder of lightning! Thou didst make of me
A man but to unman me straight again.
Why didst thou send this terrible sorcerer
Lending him even thy thunder? All too bright
A flare strikes us with blindness, all too loud
A thunder awakens not but makes us dead.

O sacred spaces of earth! To flee to you!
Were his long wanderings truly at an end,
His whose dread name I would not call, then is
This garden of errors which we call the world
A void at last. Anew the gods require
A plaything! Away! For I will serve their ends.

LEUCONE

O Telemach, thou art so changed, so changed.

TELEMACH

I grasp about me, tottering, helpless, weak.

THE FOURTH ACT

The same scene as in the second act, the hall of stone with the long table.

EUMÆUS *and* EURYCLEA.

EURYCLEA

[*Hastening in in mad terror.*

What was the meaning of that fearful stroke?

EUMÆUS

[*Who busies himself with the bow of* ODYSSEUS.

'Tis right so. For the earth pants, and my herds
Need water. The heavenly Zeus has gathered now
For weeks his clouds and silently made darkness
About Nereiton's forest-covered peak.
And I am glad to hear from out that night
The lightning and the thunder crash at last.

EURYCLEA

[*Fearfully.*

There is a stench of sulphur and of burning.

EUMÆUS

[*Grimly.*

Right so. The heavenly one would drive with smoke
The wild blasphemers.

Euryclea

O good herdsman, hide me,
If, as they say, the wooers are in the house.
For I, the oldest nurse, in truth am not
Too humble to arouse their hate and more
The malice of their distrust.

Eumæus

Fear not, old friend!
They hurl the discus in the court without
And greedily drink the black wine of my casks.

Euryclea

And is Eurymachos among them?

Eumæus

Ay.

Euryclea

If he beheld me here my doom were sealed.
He blames me that the creature of his lust,
Melanto, is not suffered by the queen
Longer to bide with her and dwells with thee.

Eumæus

Thus did Leucone draw Antinoos;
Thus did Melanto lure Eurymachos
About my head, also the treacherous
Father of the loose wench. Thus, as thou seest,
High honours hurtle on my humble roof.
Were they wild boars, I'd stick them in my stys
To fatten there. But they are only men,
And evil men, good flesh and blood gone wrong.

EURYCLEA

Have my ass brought me, swineherd, I must away.
I can bide here no longer, for fear drives me—
Fear of both gods and men; also the joy
Over the home-coming of Telemachus
Whereof I would take news unto the queen.

EUMÆUS

Now hail and rain are rattling on the roof!
Tarry until the storm has passed away.

EURYCLEA

Far rather would I trust myself to Zeus
Than to the hands of bitter, vengeful men.

EUMÆUS

I will unbar for thee the little gate
And lead thee down the path cut in the rocks
Secretly to the holy olive tree
Where, at my bidding, wait the boy and ass.
[*He opens the latch of a closed side door.*

EURYCLEA

Swift, swineherd! nay! Hold yet! A bitter care
Gnaws at my heart. What fate will be Laertes'?

EUMÆUS

Thou canst not hold him! If thou graspest him
Like to a sick old eagle, to be locked
In a harsh cage, his heart will surely break.
Let him be friended by the daughters of Zeus,
The goddesses who dwell not under roof,
And rest on foliage of the vine. He knows

That gods and shepherds are his constant friends
And that my poor, tried soul is true to him.

[*He opens the door and moist, cleansed air and a great clearness stream in.*

Eumæus

Behold how Iris's iridescent bow
Vaults over all. Does not one end of it
Rest on our king's house? Glittering in its light
We see the golden stones. The other end
Rests upon Kora and the sacred tree
Of high Athena: is not the far-seen spot
Hidden in glowing light? Ah, tell me what
Dost thou desire, O fearful one! For I
See here an omen bringing us happiness.

[*He shows* Euryclea *the bow of* Odysseus.

The thunderer's daughter is not idle! That
Dear goddess who, above all other gods,
Loves our lost king. Never before saw I
So many day owls on her olive trees
Gather. Never arose so many times
As now that heavenly one from the clear night
And stood in all my dreams with spear and shield.
About our stead she walks: almost each day
A shepherd tells me he has seen her form
Holding her vigil amid herds afar.
And thus she bade me fetch Odysseus' bow,
With speech that made no sound, because the words
Of the immortals are death to mortal man.
And now the bow awaits its archer here.

[Eumæus, *accompanied by* Euryclea, *goes out through the side gate which remains*

open. Immediately thereafter come from the rear Telemach *and* Leucone.

Leucone

Not thus, not thus, beloved!

Telemach

O Leucone,
How void of knowledge of himself is man.

Leucone

But whither wouldst thou go afar from here?

Telemach

What matters it? Wherever home is not!
There I would find myself, my father's star
Would shine upon my young, blind liberty.
And if thou'rt brave enough, thou'lt go with me.

Leucone

Thou hast nor ship nor men to row it.

Telemach

One
Light solitary nod from me and they
Will crowd aboard who followed me to Pylos,
And landed in the harbour but this hour.
A crumbling heritage shall I await,
When the illimitable beckons me
And waits for me with its unmeasured wealth?

Leucone

If thou but knowest how my soul is pained,
How bitterly whenever thou speakest thus.

TELEMACH

Because more than with boys I played with thee,
My mother thinks, and so dost thou, Leucone,
That I am of the stuff of girls and not
Of virile stripe. Ye are wrong! I am a man!
In truth, I had no father when I stood
In need of one, grew up an orphan, lapped
In the effeminate nursing of a widow.
Yet Zeus forgot me not: he knows my heart.
'Tis ye would know me not nor understand,
Ye women, and above all others: thou!
For, shall I beg? How often have I not
Sought warmth of thy cool sweetness, sought in vain?
What hast thou given me? A light caress,
Or an admonishing kiss upon my brow,
Soothing me as thou wouldst a troubled child.
And yet it was for thy sake, thine alone,
That I returned to this curse-laden isle.
Oh that the sea devoured it on this day.

[*He embraces* LEUCONE *and weeps.*

LEUCONE

O Telemach, come to thyself, thou art
Like Aiolos, god of the storms, whom ever
His own storms grasp and lift and whirl through space.
What has uprooted all thy soul, sweet friend?

TELEMACH

It is this beggar who has wrought upon me
Strong as a daemon, and I am helpless quite.
For if a man comes with a croaking, hoarse
Abominable voice, a stranger, worse!

A filthy beggar, who presses close to me,
Beats in the sacred gateway of my soul,
And says . . . and says . . . with impudent
glance, or else
With a wild, tameless flashing of command:
"I have come to rule within thy soul, being
Thy father, thy commander and thy god!"
If this betide — death's cloud sinks down on me
Or else the Atridan madness fierce with blood.

LEUCONE

Not so! Speak thou not so, O Telemach!
Whatever that man be, or god, or daemon,
Let us not judge but still await the event.
At his approach the barren springs flowed free,
And all he did, mysterious though it seem,
Yet proved to be of good and not of ill.
And he hates the destroyers of thy house.
If he return — which is not sure at all,
For like the mist he melted into air —
We must with care test all his words and acts.
For this is true: the world swarms with deceivers.
And this no less true, that the cunninger
Is still the greater, and the wiliest
Greatest of all. Therefore must we beware.
Yet Telemach, if ever the great gods
Send him, the mightiest man of all men, home —
As the dark presage of this house foretells —
Then wilt thou too come home unto thyself,
Come home, not flee, nor with thy filial love
Beautiful turned awry or to despair,
Wander afar in self-inflicted pain.

[*With a sudden gesture* TELEMACH *has freed himself from* LEUCONE *and has grasped the bow of* ODYSSEUS. *In vain*

he seeks to bend the bow. Eumæus *returns through the open door and, seeing the efforts of* Telemach, *laughs heartily. He raises his hand and points to the landscape.*

Eumæus

Behold the rainbow yonder, Telemach!
More easily the god bends it than thou
Thine own.

Telemach

[*Throws the bow from him.*
Away! It is not mine!

Eumæus

It is!
And on a day the string will twang and thou
Wilt be the bender of the mighty bow.

Telemach

It is full of sorcery: it is full of ill.
A daemon stiffens it who is my foe.
[*Almost weeping with rage and humiliation he goes to the open door and gazes into the distance.*

Eumæus

[*Softly to* Leucone.
What troubles him? What omen of ill saw he?

Leucone

Ah, that I knew this thing myself, grandfather.
For all his new, strong, manly mood is spent.
When first he learned from me that all the wildest
Among his mother's wooers were within,

He wished to plunge among them with his sword.
And ah, perhaps 'twas wrong that I restrained
him.
And then there was this beggar. O grandfather,
Who is this man beseeching help of us
Whose voice summons the heavenly fires, whose
glance
Resting on the young hero Telemach
Strikes him with fear of death?

Eumæus

What sayest thou?

Leucone

Know'st thou that he assumes Odysseus' name?

Eumæus

[*Startled.*
Who doth assume Odysseus' name, sayest thou?

Leucone

The beggar who came into the house at noon.

Eumæus

And are ye all of reason so devoid
That the poor wanderer's piteous madness haunts
ye?
Do I not know my lord, O foolish children?
Did I not hunt with him and fish and see him
A thousand times in sport on the wide fields?
Did not one mantle cover us at night
When in the mountains we pursued the wolves?
O inexperienced! This impoverished isle,
If ever it felt the tread of his strong feet
Its deeps would tremble and proclaim him king.

Leucone

The deeps tremble . . . the very pebbles dance!

Eumæus

And though he came endowed with the strange power
Of Proteus, the old sea-god, and could change
His form into a stone or beast or plant,
Or bird or fish . . . my eye would search him forth!
Odysseus could not hide himself from me.

Telemach

Good father herdsman, art thou so very sure?
'Twas but of late when in the Spartan land
Helen, at Menelaos' board, related
How through the gates of Troy my father crept
Irrecognisable. The mighty one
Assumed a beggar's aspect horrible,
Seemed ill and weak, a raucous, hollow cough
Wheezed from his stricken chest: his eyes ran rheum.

Eumæus

'Tis madness! But where is the man? Your minds
Feel the confusion of a fateful time.

[Odysseus *re-enters from the adjoining room at the rear. He seems to have grown taller and mightier, but still walks somewhat bent and heavy and silent, like a gigantic goblin of the forest. His forehead and eyes show an expression of still, repressed rage, beyond*

which lies the shadow of a terrible smile.
The dusk has fallen.

TELEMACH

[*Frightened.*

The dæmon! Am I alone the seeing one?
Or do ye also see what rises there?

EUMÆUS

[*Consciously acting unembarrassed.*

'Tis well that I discover thee, old man.
Princes have come to be our guests to-day:
Show thou thy usefulness when they're at board,
And that the darkness may not hide their mouths
Guard thou the light and feed the fire with logs.

TELEMACH

He grows, expands! He fills the very house,
Wherein no one but he can longer breathe!

EUMÆUS

[*Fearfully.*

He speaks not. Maiden, speak thou unto him!

LEUCONE

Wilt thou then guard the fire, O strange, old man?

[ODYSSEUS *approaches the fire-place.*

LEUCONE

[*Uncertainly.*

Why ask him further? See, he will do it now.

[NOAIMON *enters. His apron is spattered with blood: his head is wreathed with ivy. Through the door which he has left open one may hear singing and the music of the pipes of Pan.*

NOAIMON

[*Red with fire and wine, vigorously.*
The meat is done. The banquet may begin.

EUMÆUS

Thou has wreathed thine head Noaimon; cause also
Ivy-wreathes for the wooers to be cut.

NOAIMON

Ivy-wreaths for blasphemers? If I must!

TELEMACH

Go, call the all-voracious to the board,
That they may gather at Odysseus' feast
And gorge themselves with all his garnered wealth.
[NOAIMON *withdraws.*
And now, thou beggar! Take it that to-day
Is Kronos' day of mummery and license!
Kronos devoured his children, as thou knowest!
But on this day the master serves the slave,
And the low slave is master o'er his lord.
And so command me wholly! At the board
Shall I help crowd the spoilers of our goods,
Or go and hide me in the sty with swine?
Thou shakest thy head, then noddest: it is well.
I will obey as doth the dog his master.
[*Swiftly he goes out through the same door by which* NOAIMON *has gone.*

EUMÆUS

[*To* ODYSSEUS
If this is to be Kronos' day, fire-guardian,
And even our ruler young obeys thy voice —

Command us, too! Shall I obey the wild
Cry of the wooers? Must Leucone go
And be the handmaid of their gluttony?

ODYSSEUS

[*Mysteriously and awe-inspiring.*
What is't? There stares the maid! There stares
the slave!
And still the maid stares and the slave! They
know not,
Neither knows what to do! Girl, art thou blown
Of fine Phœnician glass, and wilt thou break
If but a prince regards thee? One of them
Whom thy own queen Penelope doth deem
Worthy of her familiar friendship?
[*The wild and empty laughter of the wooers is heard from afar.*
Go!
And when the flame leaps up, return! Obey!
[EUMÆUS *and* LEUCONE *withdraw to the right and go out into the courtyard. The door at the left which* EUMÆUS *unlatched is now ajar. From the rear room come the wooers, heated with wine and gaming:* ANTINOOS, AMPHINOMOS, EURYMACHOS, KTESIPPOS. *As they enter they are startled for a moment and cease from laughing.*

ANTINOOS

A sweetish smell as in a slaughter-house.

EURYMACHOS

And darkness of the very grave itself.

KTESIPPOS

Would they make wretched gulls of us, these herd-
ers
Of swine in that they are invisible?
And would this slavish crowd lift up their heads
Defying and affronting rightful lords?

EURYMACHOS

Why doubt it, seeing the example set
But lately by Eumæus' haughty self.

KTESIPPOS

Why is the swineherd to be seen no more?

ANTINOOS

[*Seeing* ODYSSEUS *by the fire.*
What would ye more? There's the man spake of
Moly!
The master's worthy substitute is he.

AMPHINOMOS

This is a nest of vermin, a breeding-place
Of malice and of treachery against us:
If ever ill betide 'twill spring from here.

ANTINOOS

The watchdog of the flock hates not the wolf
More bitterly than this tough herd us princes.
Consider closely — he is in the right.
Were he my serf and clung with faithfulness
So deep to me, as he doth to Odysseus
And unto Telemach, the effeminate boy,
And guarded so the treasures of my house,
God knows that he should be my friend, not serf.

Eurymachos

Antinoos is in his melting mood,
When it delights him to caress small children,
And with a lullaby sing them to sleep.
It is a mood that passes. Tell me, prince,
Seems it to thee that Telemach is still
Hidden somewhere about the farmstead here?

Antinoos

Fortune, I think, was with him on his voyage.

Amphinomos

Never forget why we are here, O princes,
Nor hold this boyish Telemach as naught!
He creeps about gaining him newer friends.
How do we know he ever put to sea?

Antinoos

He sailed! No one may doubt of that!

Amphinomos

And so
By Zeus he may return and bring with him
A line of Grecian ships unto this isle.
What then?

Antinoos

A bloody combat in which he
Who proves the stronger holds the field — naught else.

Eurymachos

Where is Melanto? Since just now I saw her
Out in the open she has vanished quite
And has not reappeared. The wench is true

To me! If I speak with her I know all,
Even whether Telemach is in the house.

KTESIPPOS

Princes, ye carry swords! Why grasp ye not
The tricky peasants with a stronger hand,
As their desert and custom teaches them.
When they appear lay hold on them! If they
Keep silence wrench their useless necks at last.
And if they hide, harry them forth from stys
Of swine, or rooms, or even from their beds
And make them serviceable with a staff.
[*He roars and beats on the table.*
What ho! Within there!

[*The fire in the fire place flares up and illuminates the room that has been growing darker and darker. Now through the gate to the yard the wooers' feast is brought in.* GLAUKOS *leads the procession, playing upon the flutes.* DRYAS *follows, carrying upon his head the roasted swine's flesh: then comes* LAMON *with a mighty wineskin,* LEUCONE *with a ewer of water for laving the hands, and* NOAIMON *with cups and ivy-wreaths.* EUMÆUS *comes last of all.*

KTESIPPOS

'Tis well for thee that thou rememberedst us!

EUMÆUS

It was the thunderous weather that delayed us;
The blessed water fell and quenched our fires.
But well may we forgive it, for it is
So deep desired by all the famished land.

Eurymachos

Where is the handmaiden Melanto, herd?
Why serves she not at table as was long
Her wont and ours at the high palace board?

Eumæus

For nothing shall ye want even wanting her.

Eurymachos

A subterfuge! Where is she! Tell me that!

Eumæus

Did I but know it I would tell thee straight.

Antinoos

[*As* Leucone *pours the water over his hands.*

Lovely Leucone, why do thine eyes show tears?
Because the youngster Telemach doth not well
And with his manhood vagrant passion shows?
Console thyself! Thus are we all.

Ktesippos

I thought
That she and Telemach are like the doves
Of Aphrodite, quite inseparable.

Amphinomos

Are, lord? They were! They are no more to-day.
For now his body the Ionian sea
Washes about, and fish and gull fight for it.
Or dost thou deem thy lover still alive?
Perhaps thou hidest him in thy little room

Secreted, the companion of thy childhood?
We will not hurt him. Send him calmly forth.

ANTINOOS

Assume the wreaths, O princes, drive forth sorrow.
Not despicable is Eumæus' feast.

[GLAUKOS *plays the pipes. The wooers place wreathes about their temples and begin to feast.*

EURYMACHOS

[*Stubbornly, as* LEUCONE *is about to place the wreath upon his brow.*

Melanto and not thou shall wreathe my head.
The robust milkmaid who from her she-goats brings
The odour of Pan hid in her earthy hair!
And so, for the last time, swine-herd: Where is she?

[*He has hurled the wreath aside.* MELANTEUS *comes in greatly excited.*

MELANTEUS

Princes, I bid ye know that in these walls
Treachery lies in wait! The while ye feast
Malevolent violence is practiced here.
Behold how pale he grows, the swineherd there —
He, the vile tool of that pernicious race
That under the very curse of all the gods
Still clings to its accursed blasphemous life.

[*They have all jumped up except* ANTINOOS.

ANTINOOS

Do not disturb our feasting. What is wrong?

Melanteus

Melanto, lord, my daughter, lies in bonds
Watched by the herdsmen who are bearing arms.
They have thrust a cruel gag into her mouth
That she, the ever faithful unto ye,
Might not betray the treachery that's here.

Eumæus

My lords, if that this goatherd does not lie
Whose vengeful hatred hounds me through the years —
If he speaks truth, I am guiltless of the deed.
But lies are all his words, barbed to destroy me.
We hanged his brother, for that he in secret
Pillaged the goatherds of our lord and prince
And sold his booty to the sea-robbers.
It is not strange that now he plots my death.

[Eurymachos *who has hastened out upon the complaint of the goatherd returns now with* Melanto. *The girl is thoroughly exhausted.*

Odysseus

Look not on me, I am a raving fool,
A madman void of reason, let me be!
Look not on me but put the fetters on me!

Eurymachos

[*His voice choked with rage.*
Tell us but this: Who gave the vile command?
And though it were Eumæus, even he,
This night would see him stark in certain death.

Melanto

[*Stretches out her hand toward* Odysseus.
'Twas he who stands beside the fire — the beggar!

ODYSSEUS

[*With rolling eyes, feigning madness.*
He who brought down the seed of flame from heaven
Wherefrom the blossoms of the fire sprang, was
Prometheus! Lo, I pluck the blossoms! Lo,
I gather flowers!
[*He pretends to pluck the flames as though they were flowers.*

ANTINOOS

[*Who, like* AMPHINOMOS, *breaks out into loud laughter.*
And so, Eurymachos,
Thou wilt not harm this gatherer of flowers.
Unknowing, weak of mind, who did the deed!
Them who obeyed him we must drag forth and slay,
For folly grown too mighty, waxeth dangerous.

KTESIPPOS

[*Hurls a wooden stool at* ODYSSEUS *which the latter parries with his arm.*
Stamp into earth this raging vermin, lords,
Of madness which spews high its venomous foam;
Else ye give freedom to all blasphemies.

ODYSSEUS

[*With a terrible smile.*
Knowest thou, man, whom thou affrontest thus?

KTESIPPOS

As I consider, mangy fellow, thou
Art one o' the gods escaped from high Olympus,
And holy madness fills thy brain as full

As swollen beans fill full a pot of clay:
'Twere to be wished the brittle shard would burst.

Eurymachos

[*Who has given* Melanto *great draughts of wine.*

Recover, my good child; come to thyself.

Antinoos

And do ye princes now wax sane once more.
And let us laugh at Pan, the frolicsome,
Who did confuse and trick these maids and serfs
Even as is seemly. His gamesome mood should not
Embitter with fear a hero's festal meal.

Melanto

Trust not this beggar who but feigns confusion.
He is a spy, a creeping traitor, quite
As clear and apt in mind as any one.
And what is more: if ye have not yet learned,
Nor other wooers in the palace know it:
I bid ye know that Telemach is hid
Here in this stead, returning safe and hale.
And that is why they cruelly fettered me
So that my arms are numb, and gagged my mouth,
That I might not bring warning to your ears.
Behold the swineherd! Mark his trembling lip!
And see Leucone's changing mien and hue!

Amphinomos

Behold, who spake the truth? Is he within?

Melanto

Ask me, my lords! Treachery is alive!

[*From the mountains the sound of the horn is heard again.*

It hollows out the earth on which ye stride.
Hear ye the blowing in the mountains? Lo,
Sounds it not like the horn of warlike Pan?
'Tis naught else than the pipe of that bad, old
And childish man Laertes, who incites
The herdsmen in the hills to trèachery.
Beware! Be on your guard! Lay not aside
The weapons, princes, where ye follow me.

Antinoos

Lo, a Cassandra risen from the sty!
If she has so much breath for prophecy,
Let her the nymph song sing or featly dance
To the flute's music: first of all let her
Crown thee, Eurymachos, as thou desiredst.
And now, if Telemach is truly here,
It is but just that unto him his guests
Grudge not a crust of bread from his own board.
Go swineherd, bid him to the table come!
Tell him I am not Kronos nor devour
Children but as sea-famine's last resort.

[*The wooers have burst out into loud laughter. Now appears, with dignity and freedom of carriage,* Telemach, *entering from the court. A silence falls.*

Telemach

I greet ye, worthy princes, and I bid
Ye welcome at my board and at my feast.

Antinoos

Most gently said. We thank thee, little man.
Behold he left his white, fair skin in Sparta,
And with a bronzed and ruddy look returns
Unto his fatherland.

Amphinomos

And who looks close
O friends, may even discover, by high Zeus,
An island of blond down o' beard.

Ktesippos

Oh, where?

Telemach

I am well pleased your mood is light and free.
Has the swineherd provided well for you?

Ktesippos

Passably well. Only not maids enough.
Thou seest Eurymachos holds his mistress close,
Antinoos being also well supplied.
I and Amphinomos have empty arms.

Eurymachos

[*To* Melanto *whom he has drawn upon his lap.*
I know not yet whom I prefer: Or thee,
Or else Penelope's little daughter there!

Antinoos

Ye know right well that Telemach's a man.
The day on which I shall his mother wed,
For twelve long days this island shall resound
With holy games in honour of the gods.
Telemach, guiding a chariot with three foals,
Will then receive the race-track's victor's crown.
But how fares Nestor? Doth his head still shake
Between his hollow shoulders as of old?
How fares the cuckold, Menelaos, speak!
And Helena, the ancient crone, what does she?

For in old age no one will play at love
With her, as once, unless it be a helot?

Telemach

Ye are welcome, all ye princes. Drink and eat,
And let it trouble you no further now
In which great game a victory perchance
Is destined to me. As for my voyaging
And the dear guest friends on whose threshold I,
The untested youth, did find such hearty welcome —
On this let me be silent. I fear Zeus,
And I would rather die than recompense
With base affronts the kindness that was mine.

Amphinomos

A very skilful chatterer! Deem ye not?
He has the heritage of his sire's false tongue.

Antinoos

Yet more, Amphinomos, he's like his mother.
I squint my eyes and, gazing at him, see
The lovely curving of his full, red lips,
The enchanting dimples in his cheeks, the look
Veiled from desire . . . then if my glances glide
Over the rounded shoulders and full arms —
I could believe his mother standing there.

Ktesippos

Why cease from the comparison, good prince?

Antinoos

Ye pant for gold. I love his mother's self.
Drink unto her who is as cold as snow!

Whom I desire ever since that far day
When she pressed me, a child, unto her bosom.
When like a great and irridescent spider
She sits, clothed by her web, beside her loom,
With that impenetrable smile of hers,
And the breath makes to heave so quietly
All the magnificence of her white flesh —
Who shall withstand her? Ah, the cruel one,
Who sinks her eye-lashes in her cold stealth,
And stretches out her web with Aphroditic
And deadly smiling for her victim's heart.

EURYMACHOS

Her picture as with sly and lying wiles
She plays with us, fans our glow to-day, to-morrow
Drenches and slays it in an icy current.

ANTINOOS

O Telemach, wert thou indeed in Sparta?
Then sawest thou not under the plantain trees
The holy stone that is memorial
Of the far day when first that mother o' thine
Danced naked 'mid the virgins of her land!
Didst thou embrace the stone, O Telemach?
And didst thou kiss the meadow which her soles
Ambrosial once touched? Or didst thou not?
Behold, to do this thing, I'd gladly swim
With these two arms through the Ionian sea,
And in the blazing glare to Sparta run,
And with bare feet across Taygetos.
And at that stone I'd throw me in the grass
Only to dream. O thou steel-bright and strange
Long-thighed, sweet Maenad, oh, why was not I
The dead Odysseus who beheld that thing?

Odysseus

Thou art right, hero Antinoos, only
The dead Odysseus will make thee a dead
Dog, ere in death thou canst his equal be.

Antinoos

I dreamed about thy mother, Telemach!
Oh, such sweet dreams! For we are young, the sap
Rises in us, Telemach, and thy mother
Is a divinity who ages not.

[*At a glance from* Odysseus, Telemach *pours more wine into the cup of* Antinoos. *It lightens.*

Zeus beckons! Wine! Thus Dionysos serves
With light the seer in the sable night
There whither never pierces Phœbus' beam.
Thou makest a seer of me, Telemach!
Guess what I see in vision? 'Tis thy mother!
Where? In her chamber! How? Naked and bare!
Embrace me then and call me father, for
By Zeus the steer who in the thunder roars,
And in the lightning rapes Europa, I
Will yet beget a brother equal thee
On that sweet body that once gave thee birth!
And ye shall wrestle, thou and he, when we
Sit at the feast, for the victorious wreath.
Thou art too weak, O Telemach, thou art
A woman! But be my friend, for lo, I love
Delicate boys.

Telemach

Call me what name demands
Antinoos, that sombre madness which

Hides from thyself the better soul of thee,
Also thy fate. Blasphemies and affronts
So shameless as thine are betray the fear
Of him who seeks to hide it and who knows
Long that a gathering fate will hem him in.

KTESIPPOS

[*After the general laughter has died down.*
His mother's little pet grows touchy now.
But still mark well the tiny milk-teeth, princes,
Which now the growling little cur has shown.

AMPHINOMOS

Now tell us clearly, O young Telemach,
Who assumest both the prophet and the lord,
What are our misdeeds in thy loud reproach?
We are neighbours, princes, mighty men and lords,
And guests and guest friends and — even have it so —
Admirers and wooers of thy lofty mother.
Wherein then seest thou the unseemly, where
The blasphemy worth death and doom? Are not
Such mighty friends adornments to a house
And honour? Does not Zeus himself protect
The hospitality thou hast betrayed?
Who wounds thee? Or who strikes thee that thou runn'st
Weeping unto thy kinsmen in the world,
Accusing thy mother's wooers and herself
Thy mother, like a boy devoid of sense?
Am I perchance a scurfy Homer like
Yon fellow, croaking songs and begging crumbs?
[*He points to* ODYSSEUS.
And not a prince, ruler of his own land,
Himself the lord of palace, serfs and herds?

KTESIPPOS

Thinkest thou we have eaten meat of swine
Nowhere but on this island Ithaca?
That there are nowhere else calves' stomachs, bread,
Wherewith to satisfy our appetite?
Our presence is an honour to thee here!

TELEMACH

Must I, a youth, teach unto ye, O men,
What honour and dishonour is? It is
Dishonour for a guest voraciously
To spoil the house whose welcome is outworn;
Dishonour for a host to suffer it,
And silently to see his goods despoiled.
Liberal is he who gives, not he who is robbed.
Liberality brings honour, robbery
And base supineness do not so to any.

EURYMACHOS

Reproach me then thy mother! Why does she
Prolong our stay with her voluptuous coldness?
Her husband's dead. What would she? Does she wait
Ever? And were he to return to-day,
Odysseus were a ruin of age and want.
And every hypocritic glance betrays her
Who panteth for our virile power unused.
So let her choose, and we will journey home,
And leave that man to cool him in her bed
Whom her experienced eye prefers. Oh, long
This life has grown most hateful unto all,
In which she holds us bound in shameful bonds
With daily temptings and with daily lies.

I hate this woman even as I love her! Nay,
I hate her more! Into her bed-chamber
I'd make my way by force and grasp her hard
And tame her arrogance unbearable.

Telemach

[*Grasps his sword.*
Take up thy sword, Eurymachos, no more
To-day shalt thou affront my mother's honour!

Eurymachos

To punish thee, O boy, I need no sword.

Antinoos

[*In the part of peace-maker.*
Let be, Eurymachos. Be peaceful. Both
Extend your hands. Be reconciled, for truly
Even Telemach has reason for his wrath.
The patience of the most long-suffering son
Must snap when such unbridled speech as ours
Is poured out over her who is his mother.

Eurymachos

[*Beats the table.*
I shall possess her if I live, or die!

Antinoos

If she prefer me, then, thou'lt die through me.

Amphinomos

Share not the booty ere the prey be yours.
'Tis I, as men have prophesied, who shall
Some day unloose that narrow zone of hers,
And strip her Tyrian garments from her limbs
And break the golden bonds above her knee.

And though I die, yet shall I see ere that
Her eye in passion break, she shall swoon away
In lust and thirst and quench her boundless glow
After the years of waiting and of want.

ODYSSEUS

The he-goat has escaped, Melanteus! Run!
The he-goat has escaped! Take to thy heels!

AMPHINOMOS

Hurl him o'er the cliff-side to the abyss!

TELEMACH

Let none insult the help-beseeching one
Who, like yourselves, is guest at the same board.

EUMÆUS

Princes, oh let not Eros change your meal
To bitterness and gall. And let the quarrel
That each may have with each within his heart
Rest till ye have returned unto the city.
For we are peaceful in this country-side,
And if ye would, a shepherds' mummery
Shall bring ye back your peace and cheerful mood.

EURYMACHOS

[*Referring to* TELEMACH.
Not ere this fellow's pale and cold in dust.

KTESIPPOS

A fool who is indulgent of his foe.
Ye have heard and seen his enmity to-day.

ANTINOOS

Who does but break the skin of the sweet child
Need hope for nothing from his mother more:

Else would I wrench his neck myself, God knows.

[Hector, *the old shepherd, jumps in with a bell about his neck, feigning to be a cow.* Glaukos *plays the flute.*

Amphinomos

Out with these swine-serfs! Out! Away! We have come
For no vile mummery, but to avenge
The treacherous breach of hospitality.

Antinoos

[*Discovering and picking up the bow of* Odysseus.

The knavish father of this son to whom
The bow belongs that I hold in my hand,
Passed on his evil cunning to his son,
Who, like a murderer, aims at unarmed men,
And speeds envenomed arrows like to him.

Telemach

[*Snatches the bow from him.*

Desecrate not this bow, for it is mine.

Antinoos

Great is thy daring!

Amphinomos

Be not hasty, lords.
Come, let us draw aside, as judges do,
Who pass a sentence ere they execute it.

[*The* Wooers *together with* Melanto, Melanteus, *the piping* Glaukos *and the other shepherds, withdraw into the*

court. Odysseus, Telemach, Eumæus *and* Leucone *remain.*

Odysseus

[*Gazing deep into the eyes of* Telemach *who quivers with emotion.*

Hold! Not a step! No word nor any sound!
This counsels one whom the immortal gods
Through painful years of heavy wandering
Taught patience measureless. One who endured
And suffered all that amid gods and men
Is given to suffer and endure at all.

Leucone

[*To* Telemach.

Dost thou not recognise the eye of him,
The unforgetable glory of our childhood?
I gaze and gaze upon him! All at once
The fogs are torn asunder and a god
Shines through the rift with all his radiance.
Go to him, for he is, he is . . .

Telemach

[*Suddenly overwhelmed embraces sobbing the knees of* Odysseus

My father!

THE FIFTH ACT

The same scene as in the fourth act. ODYSSEUS *sits beside the fire.* TELEMACH *embraces his knees. Both weep.* LEUCONE *and* EUMÆUS *stand at some distance from them.*

ODYSSEUS

Listen how deep the night breathes, Telemach.
Oh, let us also breathe and calm ourselves.

TELEMACH

O holy man, O father, punish me,
For lo, I had betrayed thee in my heart.

ODYSSEUS

Nothing shall be a chiding unto thee
In my return. Thou excellent and old
Eumæus, station guards about us lest
The wasters of our goods surprise us here.
How full of magic are the paths that men
Wandering pursue. Do I not feel as though
I were emerging from a dream that is
Like a great sea, and greet the dawn again?
And yet again I seem to lapse in dreams
When I salute thee as my son, strong youth,
Whom long ago I left a stammering babe.
And last these wooers — wooers of my spouse!
Could I have hoped to meet them while I yet
Was living on the strange round of the earth?

Foals they whom once I pampered with sweet bread,
Have grown unruly stallions, wild and fierce
In this illimitable liberty.
Thus fares it with the creatures of our hearth —
Even with man himself who breaks all bonds
When the folk-shepherd ceases from his watch.
The watchdog which should guard the herd becomes
A ravenous wolf attacking that same herd.
The bee, a robber, turns against the hive!
And here a herd of robbers gone astray!
And so my homeland calls for bloody work.

Telemach

Father, now that thy spirit fills me quite,
I feel as though but now thou hadst begotten
My body too. I feel my manhood now.
Instead of many luring aims that mock,
At last my path is open, straight and fixed.
My glance is clear and every muscle waits
Tensely for the great work that must be done.

Odysseus

Be not disturbed though my whole body seem
Yet whelmed and trembling by the storm within.
A thousand times the flood passed over me,
Yet not like to this last and magic wave
That washed away the twenty wandering years.
O Telemach, I am young, I am young once more.
Spite of the hour of fate that shakes my soul,
My heart leaps with the sacred thirst of slaughter.
O child, O son, O what magnificent

Delight, gift of the gods, to exact my vengeance.
What now is all my wandering's misery? Naught.

Telemach

How thinkest thou the venegance to exact?

Odysseus

Through blood! Through blood? How otherwise? Through blood!
And is thy mother still as beautiful,
O Telemach, as all these wooers say?

Telemach

A radiance is about her everywhere.

Odysseus

And will she not despise me and pursue?
Thou art silent. Do thou then, O slender maid,
Thou, by whose lips Athena to me spake,
When I sank o'er this threshold — do thou speak!
Perhaps, O pure of brow, she once again
The maiden goddess will inspire thy heart,
As once before wisdom she breathed in thee.

Leucone

O king, think not upon the words I spake.
Now art thou here, divinest man of men.
Who feels what we have become, thou being here,
Knows what we needs were when thou wert afar:
Nor less than we the mother and the queen.
Never will she become thine enemy,
For thou art here: divinely rises she
Thine equal in error, in endurance great,
And waxing, nigh thee, to the very stars.

ODYSSEUS

O distrust dire that nestles in my soul,
And like a bitter poison fills my blood.
How could I breathe, could I not distrust too.
Even gods and far more men and, last, myself,
And women, in the end! Are they not called
Circe, Calypso, Helena and even,
Even Clytemnestra! Yet not one of these,
Though evil of heart, held such an evil court
As this blasphemer who was once my wife.
And can she be Penelope indeed?
Oh, my soul shudders at her very name.

EUMÆUS

O king, I have been ever true to thee.
So let me freely speak what my heart thinks.
Our queen herself has broken not her faith.
For I awaited ever thy return,
And, in reward, her grace upon me was
As on no other man upon the isle.
My faithfulness was never her annoy.
Once, many years ago, thou toldest me
A tale of how thou broughtest home with thee
From Sparta once the maiden newly won.
Thou saidest, in the house of Icarios,
Her father, there surrounded her a swarm
Of youthful wooers, passion-stung and seared,
The while Penelope in icy mood,
Remained inviolate amid the flames.
Thou calledst her Circe then, and only now
I grasp the sense of the dark words which thou
Spakest but now unto the wooers here.
For often didst thou say with laughter wild
In the old days, that thou hadst won thy spouse,
Forcing thy sweetheart with the battle sword,

The crimson flower Moly in thine hands,
Else hadst thou been naught but a grunting swine
In Aphrodite's Spartan sanctuary.

Odysseus

I laugh as then, for thou dost speak the truth.

Eumæus

O king, behold thy father who rests here.

[*He shows him behind a hanging* Laertes *asleep on a heap of dry leaves.*

Odysseus

Ay, I have seen him and I know him too.
Howe'er it be, his old heart did not yield.
So do ye, too, mine eyes, hold out nor melt
Before this light of woe insufferable.
O pallid countenance, sick and weathered too,
O thou poor, crooked back! O ye poor hands
Brown, torn with digging of the earth! O feet,
Cut, bruisèd, torn and full of cruel scars,
And hardened by the weary, trodden earth.
Ay, thou and I and I and thou, we two
Were driven to dig our weary path through life
As through an endless tunnel to this hour,
Like moles! Ah, grasp the earth which ever we
Digged up and handle it and prophesy
Deep things and mystic from the shafts of life.

Eumæus

Ay, lord, for with his horn he prophesied,
Like a blind seer he foretold thy coming.

Odysseus

What drove him forth from the king's golden roof
Into the wilderness?

EUMÆUS

Dear lord, he waited.
And no one held him back, not even the queen,
Neither by kind persuasion or command.
In sanctuary of the warlike Pan,
High amid mountains did he take his rest,
From whence he peered across the eternal sea.
Firmly he fixed his eye on each new sail
For many hours and for whole days of hours.
He whispered, spake aloud unto himself,
Beckoning ever in the delusive hope,
As though it were thyself whom now at last
The wind and wave were bringing back. And ever
His eye would ask what never his lips confessed —
For never of his sorrows did he speak.
Whether a ray of hope of thy return
Still dwelt in me, he asked. Naught else. Or but
Whether sweet hay or bitter foliage were
The easier couch. He planted beans and onions
And leek, faithfully as the meanest hind.
But wheresoever he goes, he dreams of thee,
And in his sleep, as now, art thou with him.

ODYSSEUS

[*Kissing the feet of* LAERTES *amid tears.*
Live! Wait for me until we well have cleansed
Of shame and blood this island. Then will I
Rest with thee, father, on the foliage dry
And cut the holy grape of Dionysos,
And plunge the hoe into the fruitful earth.
Then shall the peasant's frugal fare delight
As never the dainties of the wealthy feast.

The royal seat is thine, O Telemach.
This aged man has chosen the better part,
And I shall share it with him, O my son.
And even as I wash his calloused feet
And cool the stripes, and heal the wounds of him
With balsam, even so shall I guard and heal
This land of ours, sucked dry, emaciate,
Covered with cruel stripes, until it rise
In glorious vigour even as of old.

EUMÆUS

O king, I have unleashed the hounds and they
Are all about the stead. None may escape,
And these same wooers are the wooers' chiefs.
Scarcely will ever an hour like this return
Wherein we hold their lives within our hands.
If they are sped, the others powerless lie.

ODYSSEUS

Nay, nay, not yet! Their lives are lost, in truth.
But Pallas bids me spare them, give to them
Respite till comes the fateful day when all
Who shamed my hearth shall fall beneath the sword.

[*The screeching of women's voices is heard, and the laughter and cries of men.* NOAIMON *enters.*

NOAIMON

O ye abandoned, O ye bestial men!
They murmur as the hares in time of heat.
The wench Melanto's passed from hand to hand,
And Glaucos threw his pipes afar and fled.

Odysseus

Now they approach.

Telemach

With sounds of gluttony.

Noaimon

They are like maddened bulls devoid of sense
With rage, and swearing death to Telemach.

[*The four wooers re-enter, their minds wrapt in madness by drunkenness, hatred, lust and the night.*

Antinoos

Youth, give to us the bow, the sacred bow
Which thou didst keep from us.

Amphinomos

I'll make thee jump
Like a lust slave I bought and cast aside,
Too loathly for my lusts.

Ktesippos

Give then to us
The bow of thy abominable sire,
But in such way it does not mire our hands.
For we would shoot with arrows and — at thee.

Eurymachos

Thou shall know how it is in Hades. Thou
Shalt make the light pestilent now no more,
Thou foul and loathsome traitor, Telemach,
Who creepest to Sparta even like a cur
Whining for murderers to cut our throats.

Give me the bow, to me first, give it me!
Judgment we have declared together, one
And only one must here the hangman be!

Antinoos

Wine, wine!

Odysseus

'Tis well! Give them the bow, O swineherd.

Eumæus

[*Places the quiver and the bow before* Antinoos.
Only the cool souled archer hits his aim.

Antinoos

Ay, thou art right. First for the weakest, then!
Ktesippos, span the string upon the bow.

Ktesippos

Naught easier.

[*He attempts it in vain.*

Amphinomos

A second Telemach
Art thou, Ktesippos. Leave the bow alone.
[*He takes the bow and succeeds no better.*

Eurymachos

And thou art a third Telemach, it seems.

Amphinomos

Never did any man's arm bend this bow.

EURYMACHOS

Or none but mine.

[*He takes the bow and tries to bend it.*

ANTINOOS

[*Looks on jeeringly.*

More vigorously, man!
Canst thou not even bend the curving wood
So as to span it with the ringing gut
That speeds the certain arrow to its aim!
The wench thou hittest in the dark, O hero!
An evil presage for thee, but for me
A goodly one. A queen is greater prey,
A goddess above all, than a mere wench.

AMPHINOMOS

Easier by far thy leaping was about
Priapus with the shepherds. And now must
Thou sweat therefor, my lord Eurymachos.

ANTINOOS

Give me the bow at last that I may shoot,
And ye may learn who is the master here.

[*He takes the bow and strives in vain to bend it. The wooers laugh.*

TELEMACH

If ye desire to slay me, do so, princes!
Long has life been of little worth to me.
I will prepare the weapon for you even.
And see if any matter ail the bow.

ANTINOOS

There is no woman in the flesh, my friends,
Who will give birth unto a man such as

That man must be who of himself could say
That he alone this mighty bow can bend.

Ktesippos

Then let us do't together.

[*Half in rage, half in laughter, the four together try to bend the bow.*

Odysseus

[*Cries aloud.*

Telemach!

Telemach

Ay, father!

Odysseus

[*As before.*

Telemach, Odysseus has
Come back again!

Antinoos

What didst thou call? Thou yonder?

Amphinomos

The swineherd's house is full of aged men,
Children and fools.

Odysseus

Lad, give the bow to me!

[Telemach *steps among the wooers, takes the bow and lays it, together with the quiver, at the feet of* Odysseus.

Eurymachos

This childish playing with the bow is over.
Take ye your seats, the judgment is at hand,
And yonder boy may now defend himself.

ODYSSEUS

The hour of judgment is at hand. Thou sayest it.
[*Firmly and easily he curves the two ends of the bow and secures the string.*

AMPHINOMOS

What does the beggar there? Have care, my friends!

TELEMACH

Hold court, my lords, now and pronounce your judgments.

ODYSSEUS

Hearest thou not, O Telemach? Odysseus
Has come again unto his homeland?

TELEMACH

Ay,
He has come back, I know it well, O father.

AMPHINOMOS

[*Like the others bursting out into laughter that is touched with terror.*
The hour confuses us. The heating wine
And night and love. Let us fare homeward now.
Easy for them with juggling folly now
To conquer us, so that our lips must laugh,
Nor execute the bloody punishment.

ANTINOOS

Ye may go home: I'll bed me with Leucone.

EURYMACHOS

[*Collapsing and raising himself again.*
How now, wine! I do carry thee and thou

Wouldst throw me to the earth? Let be those tricks.

Amphinomos

Come homewards.

Antinoos

With Leucone I sleep this night.

Odysseus

Odysseus has returned. Give heed, ye men!

Ktesippos

[*Hurls a cow's foot at* Odysseus *and hits him.*
I had imagined that Odysseus thus —
A carrion eaten by the worms, like thee.

Odysseus

Sharp is thy glance, O Ktesippos, therefore
Thou farest last to Hades.— Seest thou
With eyes as clear as his, Antinoos?
Nay? Knowest thou not this brow and not at all
The man and archer who now lifts the arrow
And lays it swiftly on that sacred bow,
Which, like Apollo's bow, and like the arrows
Of Artemis, is an unerring one?
Stare not. Grow sober. Learn at least by whose
Strong hand thou diest ere thy shade flies hence.

Antinoos

[*Who has stared at him, suddenly leaping up in recognition.*
Slaughterer! Trojan butcher! Ay, 'tis he
Who led away our youths to distant lands,
And had them slain for Helena! Right so!
Thou shame-corroded, lying scoundrel, thou!

I grudge thee not to the viper in the palace!
Creep in thy marriage bed and soil her flesh.

ODYSSEUS

[*Bending the bow and aiming at* ANTINOOS.
And thou, O fateful arrow, pierce his breast!
[ANTINOOS, *transfixed, falls across the table.*

ANTINOOS

Murderer!

ODYSSEUS

[*Has swiftly placed a second arrow against the string and pierced* EURYMACHOS *who, with protruding eyes, strives to keep erect.*
I am a trifle swift, Eurymachos,
And when the night began thou thoughtest not
Of what it would give birth to, nor that night
Would end for thee no more forevermore.

EURYMACHOS

Murderer!

AMPHINOMOS

Are ye drunken? Or does madness
Attack ye, princes, or are these wild tricks?

ODYSSEUS

It is a wild, strange jest, Amphinomos,
Which the immortal gods play on ye! Look,
The heavenly ones regard us, and they laugh.

MELANTEUS

[*Falls down before* ODYSSEUS.
If thou art Odysseus, have compassion. I
Am but a mean and very humble hind,

How should I show rebellion unto lords?
But spare me and like to the swineherd, I
Will quietly deliver in thy hands
Whom thou, like these, mayest slay in secret then.

Odysseus

Hang him, and deal thus also with Melanto,
The wench.

[Eumæus *and* Noaimon *drag* Melanteus *out.*

Amphinomos

Art thou Odysseus? Is it truly
The wrath of the terrible one that rages here?
Then tell me of my wrong! Is it my guilt
That in thy house I used the sacred right
Of hospitality?

Odysseus

It is not that:
Thou art too young and far too lecherous.

Ktesippos

Weapons! What happens here?

Amphinomos

I ask that, prince,
Even as thou. We dream or else are mad.
Eurymachos! Antinoos! Why so silent?
Why burns the flame so green and smouldering?

Odysseus

'Tis poisoned wood of a certain ship that once
Was wrecked, and ye must smother in the smoke.

[*He shoots* Amphinomos *through the breast.*

AMPHINOMOS

[*Groping about.*

Light! Light! The light's gone out! I see no more!

ODYSSEUS

Bright is it! Helios fares to Acheron and lights
The way of all the dead.— Now, Ktesippos,
Show us thy speed! Thou hesitatest? Flee!
Thou art a game one drives! No noble prey
Struck in the heart? Dost linger? Show thy speed!

KTESIPPOS

Help! Help!

[*He determines at last upon flight and runs out through the door into the yard. Quietly* ODYSSEUS *goes to the door and, with unerring aim, shoots out into the darkness.*

ODYSSEUS

Cry thou aloud, for Hades hears thee!

[*He stands long without moving.*

TELEMACH

[*Approaches his father.*

Nothing my sword has done. Thou didst it all!

ODYSSEUS

Patience! Patience! Yet is there much to do,
And thy sword will be sated ere all ends.
What will thy mother say, O Telemach,
That I her favourite playthings broke so soon?

ELGA

THE FIRST SCENE

A tall and sombre room in a cloister. An antique bed behind dark hangings in a niche of the wall. A great fire-place. The tall window is open. The time is sunset. A knight enters, just as he has dismounted. He is followed by his servant who carries in coats, traveling-robes and saddles.

THE KNIGHT

I began to think that we would have to pass the night in the open. We have done well to find shelter.

THE SERVANT

Yes, my Lord.

THE KNIGHT

The chamber is small, but the bed seems good. We have even a fire-place.

THE SERVANT

The serf who relieved me of the horses and led them to the village crossed himself many times as he helped me carry in the saddles. The stupid fellow declared that it was often uncanny in this chamber.

THE KNIGHT

Ha! Ha! Are you afraid? But let us prepare for any event. There are ghosts of flesh and

blood. Place my pistols beside the bed.— I confess, to be sure, that the bed is strange enough.

THE SERVANT

Yes, it is strange.

THE KNIGHT

When you consider, it has far more the appearance of a coffin than of a bed. You had better raise the hangings. I would rather have the moon shine straight into my face than be smothered behind those black cloths.— Will our wine suffice?

THE SERVANT

We will be in Warsaw to-morrow. It will hold out until then without doubt. In Warsaw we must buy more.

THE KNIGHT

This chamber seems to be in an old tower, Peter. The walls are round.

THE SERVANT

Yes, my lord. The serf said so. And he added this: that the tower had been built long before the cloister, and that the cloister had been built against and around it.

THE KNIGHT

[*Pushing aside a frugal repast.*] Clear this away. I have enough. But let the cup stand and the jug.— Now go to bed, Peter, and to-morrow awaken me before sunrise.— O, Mother of God, I wish we were well at home.— Good-night.

[THE SERVANT *has withdrawn.* THE

Knight sits at the round table supporting his head on his hands. Diagonally through the window the moonlight comes in ever clearer and brighter. A Monk *appears in the door. He carries a bundle of faggots.*

The Monk

[*In a low voice.*] Forgive me. [*He approaches the fire-place, puts down his burden and begins to build a fire of faggots and logs.*

The Knight

Who is it comes so late? Ah, it is you, reverend father.

The Monk

[*Gently correcting him.*] Brother.

The Knight

Very well: reverend brother. You see, reverend brother, that I have no need of a fire. I have opened the window and take pleasure in the mild, moonlit night. There is no need.

The Monk

The nights are cool in this part of the country.

The Knight

What do you say, brother?

The Monk

[*Does not answer.*

The Knight

[*Shakes his head in surprise.*

THE MONK

[*Has arisen and is about to withdraw.*

THE KNIGHT

Reverend brother, I beg you to give me some information before you go. Is it true that I am in the principality of Sendomir?

THE MONK

Yes.

THE KNIGHT

It is a blessed land. Everywhere magnificent forests and hills and gorges. And it is full of blossoms. The fields are fertile. Here I would wish to live and build my hut were I a son of this land.— Are you cold, brother?

THE MONK

No.— Good night.

THE KNIGHT

Stay and partake of my wine! It is a fiery Spanish wine that warms the blood. Drink, I beg of you!

THE MONK

[*Refuses by a gentle motion of his head.*

THE KNIGHT

I beg of you — drink! I bid you drink from the cup of my beloved — a cup of pure gold! I beseech you, join me.

THE MONK

Brother, I must not hurt you. [*He touches the cup to his lips.*] I thank you — and now: good night.

THE KNIGHT

Stay, brother, I like you. At least answer me one other question. I am a stranger, ignorant of the land. Tell me then: who built this noble cloister?

THE MONK

[*With a sombre glance into the eyes of the* KNIGHT.] Why do you ask me?

THE KNIGHT

Simply, brother, because I suppose you know.

THE MONK

You know it yourself.

THE KNIGHT

Why should I ask, if I knew it?

THE MONK

Yet one does at times.

THE KNIGHT

You are a strange saint assuredly, brother. Why do you not tell me who founded the monastery? There is enough and more than enough of wine in my tankard. Drink! Let us drink to the weal of that noble and blessed man who founded it.

THE MONK

I thank you, my lord.

THE KNIGHT

Look, brother, I drink to the founder's weal. Why? For the founding of monasteries really goes against the grain with me. It is no part of my character as a knight, a rider, a warrior. But I am comfortable here. Magnificently comfortable. This is a splendid place. Blessed be the man to whom I owe this delightful hour.

THE MONK

You are a German, my lord?

THE KNIGHT

You have guessed it.

THE MONK

You have a merry soul, my dear lord: God keep it for you.

THE KNIGHT

Brother, it was not always so. Come, move yon chair a little nearer and sit down. Look you, there was a time when I did nothing but pull a wry face over the sourness of life. I could hardly force myself to a smile.— But look at this picture. [*He shows him a miniature which is fastened to a chain in his bosom.*

THE MONK

[*Growing pale.*] Is it your wife?

THE KNIGHT

It is my wife. And here, brother, is my child.

THE MONK

A beautiful woman.

THE KNIGHT

Yes, brother. And look: a beautiful child.

THE MONK

Then beware, beware . . .

THE KNIGHT

What do you mean?

THE MONK

Beware lest you too build a monastery in the end.

THE KNIGHT

What do you mean by that?

THE MONK

Let no man found his happiness upon a wife or child . . .!

THE KNIGHT

Good brother, we do not understand each other. You are a monk: it is well. But I am not one. As God lives, I am no monk. You live unto heaven, I live unto earth. And behold — the earth is divinely beautiful. Hard is the iron and grim and cold. Softer than petals of the rose is woman and fragrant and warm. I love them both: I hold them both in my arm. And you — have chosen the cross!

THE MONK

[*Throbbing as with a fever, whispers.*] I have the cross.

THE KNIGHT

Brother, you are trembling. Are you ill?

THE MONK

No! — Come hither! — Do you see — yonder — in the fog . . . ?

THE KNIGHT

Ruins. Broken walls. Whose was the castle?

THE MONK

The Count Starschenski's. And all that fruitful and blessed land that you see — it was his, too.

THE KNIGHT

And what is the story of it all?

THE MONK

You are riding to Warsaw. Ask John Sobieski after him. Like yourself he held in his arms sword and wife. And yet, in the end, he took the cross alone. Good night.

[*There is heard the muffled sound of choral music.*

THE KNIGHT

Will you leave me so soon?

THE MONK

Assuredly. I am going to mass, a mass for the dead. [*He disappears.*

[*The singing continues for a while. Dressed as he is, the* KNIGHT *throws himself wearily on the bed. It grows*

darker on the stage as his consciousness fades and brighter again in the visionary structure of his dream which the spectators share with him.

THE SECOND SCENE

A tall and beautiful and cheerful chamber bathed in sunlight. STARSCHENSKI *is richly dressed. In his arms he holds his little daughter who is not yet two years old.* MARINA, *his mother, a venerable matron sits in a window niche busy with some handiwork. The* NURSE.

STARSCHENSKI

Mother.

MARINA

Well?

STARSCHENSKI

I am happy.

MARINA

That is well for me. Then I am happy too.

STARSCHENSKI

Should I not be happy, mother? Who should be happy if not I? — Elga!

THE NURSE

Elga! Listen! Your father is calling you. When your father calls you, you must heed, Elga.

STARSCHENSKI

Let her be, nurse. Do not interrupt her most important little affairs. I can see her. And

when I pass my hand over the bluish black radiance of her hair — [*he does so*] — she is glad and suffers it willingly. Do you not, Elga?

LITTLE ELGA

Atti, atti!

THE NURSE

She says atti. That is her way of saying father.

STARSCHENSKI

Do you say father? Come, daughter, come! You are mine! Yes! You are my daughter. Where is your mother?

THE NURSE

My lady is dressing for the midday meal.

STARSCHENSKI

She adorns herself for me, mother. [*He gives* LITTLE ELGA *to the* NURSE.] There, nurse, take her! Hold her, nurse!

LITTLE ELGA

[*In the* NURSE'S *arms.*] Atti! Atti!

STARSCHENSKI

Was it not well that we called her Elga after her mother? Has she not her mother's hair? The same black hair and the blue eyes? — Go, nurse!

[*The* NURSE *withdraws with the child.*

STARSCHENSKI

[*After a silence.*] Mother!

MARINA

My son?

STARSCHENSKI

I am happy.

MARINA

Then I am happy too.

STARSCHENSKI

Did you ever dream . . . I mean in the old days when you and I lived solitary . . . when I was alone and shy of all men — did you dream that I could ever become so happy?

MARINA

No. I never imagined it. May God preserve your happiness for you.

STARSCHENSKI

Are you afraid for me?

MARINA

No. But time never stands still. When one lacks happiness one may wish for it. And desire and hope heal the heart. When one is happy one has more cause for fear.

STARSCHENSKI

Mother mine, mother mine, it is in our very blood — this brooding and sophisticating, this anxiety and this dread. And, do you see — her blood is light: it is for that that I love her so — Ah, mother, do not keep your eyes so steadily bent upon your embroidery frame! Look up and look about you!

Out of doors it is spring! Let us put crystal chalices filled with roses on the table and fetch the oldest wine from the cellar — and Elga will be with us.

MARINA

[*Moved.*] You love her, you do love her, my son!

STARSCHENSKI

I love her, mother. You may well say that. And yet you hardly know what you say when you utter those words. For twenty years I lived, as it seems, in a dungeon, without light, reluctantly gnawing my mouldy bread. The world seemed no more to me than that — I do not know why. I could not understand other men when they spoke of flowers, of green forests, of golden harvests, when they heard a note of joy in the song of the birds and a laughter in the blue of heaven. I felt myself degraded and enslaved. I have light now and liberty. She has given me vision and freedom.

[ELGA *enters swiftly.*]

ELGA

Starschenski!

STARSCHENSKI

Elga?

ELGA

We must to horse to-day and hunt.

STARSCHENSKI

Let us hunt and ride. But not over the young crops.

ELGA

Over the fields and hedges and fences and ditches. . . . Look!

[*A butterfly has settled on her bosom.*]

STARSCHENSKI

The very spring flutters against your breast.

ELGA

A butterfly.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Takes the butterfly and crushes it.*]

ELGA

What are you doing?

STARSCHENSKI

Nothing. That place is mine.

ELGA

Dear fool.

STARSCHENSKI

Elga!

[*They embrace and kiss each other.*]

MARINA

[*Looking up.*] You are kissing each other again.

STARSCHENSKI

Yes, mother, we are kissing each other.— Do you love me, Elga.

ELGA

To-day: yes!

STARSCHENSKI

And will you always keep on loving me?

ELGA

Always? Always? Some day I shall be dust! — But to-day I am alive.— Let be!

STARSCHENSKI

Stay! Stay — one moment more.— O eyes of her!

ELGA

You are hurting me.

STARSCHENSKI

Dear hand!

ELGA

Let be.

STARSCHENSKI

Do you know that your brothers are coming to-day?

ELGA

Grischka and Dimitri?

STARSCHENSKI

Both.

ELGA

Why? What do they desire?

STARSCHENSKI

Do not be anxious about that.

ELGA

I am not anxious. But I do not desire them to come again and again and take money from you.

STARSCHENSKI

Perhaps they do not want money this time.

ELGA

And even if they want it. They are not to have a farthing! Promise me that.

STARSCHENSKI

I would promise you this and far more if it were not that they are your brothers.

ELGA

Mother, help me! Promise me that!

MARINA

My son, you should not lend yourself to their extravagance. But as for you, my daughter: they are your brothers.

ELGA

You are both spoiling my beautiful day.

STARSCHENSKI

I will do all you desire.

ELGA

So not a farthing.

STARSCHENSKI

No! But be merry! Be joyful when we sit at table with your brothers. We will feast. We

will put the young peach blossoms into our wine and thank God for life.

MARINA

Ah, thank God in a different fashion, my children, not as you are doing.

STARSCHENSKI

In this fashion, mother, and in no other. When the wine foams and Elga laughs there is no other paradise either in heaven or on earth.

MARINA

Do not be sinful.

STARSCHENSKI

Mother, when I hold Elga in my arms . . . can I be sinful then? Does not God praise himself through her? Is he not glorified in her? Is not the unimaginable creative power of God almost exceeded in this being? Can you tell me of any other fruit on any other tree of the Gardener who created us that is half as splendid, as sweet and as divine as this? Do I not adore God through her? Do I not enjoy Him in her? Who am I that He should have given you to me?

ELGA

Then guard me well!

STARSCHENSKI

[*After a brief pause, with profound determination.*] That I shall do —

[DIMITRI *and* GRISCHKA *enter with great vivacity.*

DIMITRI

Here we are.

STARSCHENSKI

Dimitri and Grischka, I bid you both welcome.

GRISCHKA

[*Kissing* MARINA's *hand.*] God guard you, my lady.

ELGA

Have you been seen in the courtyard?

DIMITRI

[*After he, too, has kissed* MARINA's *hand.*] No. We came in by way of the garden through the little gate in the wall near the old tower.

STARSCHENSKI

What did you do with your horses?

GRISCHKA

Old Timoska, your overseer, was wandering about there. He received them from us.

ELGA

What business has Timoska near the old tower?

STARSCHENSKI

I do not know.

GRISCHKA

When we appeared he seemed startled.

MARINA

He knows no fear for himself. He is anxious for his lord alone. I know he suspects you of con-

spiring with the discontented among our nobles against John Sobieski, our king. He himself saw service under Sobieski, and he fears that the king may finally become suspicious of his lord.

STARSCHENSKI

He is needlessly anxious about me. He is old and faithful.

GRISCHKA

[*Laughing.*] And gruff.

ELGA

Who knows that he is faithful? — Take off your coats, dear brothers.— How fares our cousin?

DIMITRI

Oginski is well.

GRISCHKA

He is better off than we are. He is careful of the little which our father, as his guardian, put aside for him. He keeps himself hidden, but otherwise he leads a goodly life.

STARSCHENSKI

I am glad of that. You have conspired with your fellows among the nobility out of passion and your own free decision. Oginski is entangled in your revolt without cause and is no hero to boot.

GRISCHKA

He is not.

MARINA

He thought it his duty to imitate you because you were his friends and models.

DIMITRI

Yes.

STARSCHENSKI

I am glad if he fares well and calmly as accords with his nature. Why does he not sometime mount a horse by night and visit us?

DIMITRI

He is too timid.

STARSCHENSKI

Then tell him that I beg him to do so. One should stir him up.

MARINA

[*Bitterly.*] Yes, that is what one should do. When I saw him he slunk about pressed against the walls.

ELGA

He is womanish in his soul. I would not have him here.

STARSCHENSKI

You are too hard. His nature is gentle but perhaps it is richer than ours. Let him come and warm his feet at my hearth.

DIMITRI

Our father often treated him harshly.

GRISCHKA

And usually with contempt.

ELGA

[*Coldly.*] You may say that. Father treated him justly.

MARINA

Come, Elga, support me.

ELGA

[*With sweet serviceableness.*] Aye, little mother, to the end of the earth.

[MARINA *leaning on* ELGA, *goes out with her.*

STARSCHENSKI

Wine! — You are thirsty.

DIMITRI

We rode three hours — wildly!

STARSCHENSKI

Wildly as you live.

GRISCHKA

It does not profit one to drag out life tamely and slowly.

STARSCHENSKI

Ah, it does.

DIMITRI

You may say that. I cannot.

GRISCHKA

Nor can I.

DIMITRI

It often seems to me as though we hastened about with a broken spear-point in our backs.

GRISCHKA

Aye. From intoxication to intoxication, from madness to madness, lest the spear burn.

STARSCHENSKI

You are poor.

DIMITRI

And you?

STARSCHENSKI

No.

DIMITRI

Do you not feel the festering wound about the spear?

[A servant has brought in a decanter and glasses and poured the wine.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Raises his glass.*] Drink! — You say I do not feel the wound. There was a time when I felt it, and as you are seeking forgetfulness I sought death. I sought it in the wars of Sobieski — and then buried myself in the stillness like your cousin Oginski. I was a fool. I no longer feel the spear-point and the grinding wound. [*He touches his glass to theirs.*] There *is* happiness on earth.

GRISCHKA

Do you think so?

STARSCHENSKI

There is.

DIMITRI

Where?

STARSCHENSKI

Sit down.— There is happiness in the love of woman.

DIMITRI *and* GRISCHKA *both laugh boisterously.*

STARSCHENSKI

You laugh? Why do you laugh?

DIMITRI

Because you say that.

STARSCHENSKI

Has your experience been different?

GRISCHKA

[*Laughing.*] Surely. As for me — all women have grown stale to me.

STARSCHENSKI

All?

DIMITRI

All, as I enjoyed them, one after another.

STARSCHENSKI

Perhaps.— They are all stale save only one.

DIMITRI

And who could that be?

STARSCHENSKI

She!

GRISCHKA

[*After a brief silence.*] Kinsman, you are a miracle of a man. You can speak so after nearly three years of marriage.

STARSCHENSKI

Yes, I can speak so.

DIMITRI

And you feel nothing of satiety?

STARSCHENSKI

Nothing. Listen: When on that rainy night four years ago she arose before me like a vision in the Warsaw streets . . .

DIMITRI

It was an evil time for our father and sister.

GRISCHKA

An evil time.

STARSCHENSKI

Evil for them both, but not for me.

GRISCHKA

Accursed be the pack that drove my father into misery.

DIMITRI

The slaves and henchmen be accursed that made our father and our sister beggars.

STARSCHENSKI

Yes, she was wretched and looked like a beggar maid when she ran after me and besought my help. . . . No more of that! When I stepped with her into the chamber . . .

DIMITRI

Aye, where our poor father, sick to death, huddled in his straw, his head upon a saddle, awaited his heroic end!

STARSCHENSKI

I saw her only! The candle burned brightly, but I saw only her.— And since that day, in every waking moment of the long years — I have seen only her. [*In mystic contemplation.*] She hides the universe from me. She is *my* universe.— I see her only.

DIMITRI

[*After some hesitation, slyly.*] Kinsman!

STARSCHENSKI

Speak! Tell me what you desire.

DIMITRI

You have done much for us.

STARSCHENSKI

Nothing! It is nothing! What I can do for you is nothing!

GRISCHKA

No, you have done much for us. The debt of gratitude we owe you is too great; we will never be able to pay it. It is a bitter thing for us that we must increase it. However, we are in the midst of a conflict. We are fighting for the liberty and honor of the class to which we belong. And also we serve the cause of the people.

STARSCHENSKI

I do not.

GRISCHKA

Believe and act as you please. We grudge you no peace or happiness. But we, on the other hand,

are home and houseless. Our enemies give us no rest. Without money we cannot bide in security for even an hour.

STARSCHENSKI

Ask what you must have.

DIMITRI

A thousand golden ducats.

STARSCHENSKI

You shall have them. But be silent.

[*The old* STEWARD *enters.*

STARSCHENSKI

What do you want, Timoska?

TIMOSKA

I am disturbing you. I will come another time.

STARSCHENSKI

Come hither, Timoska.— Forgive me. I have had to train myself to administer with earnestness that which is mine. Over an hundred spans plough on my fields. More than five hundred peasants are at work.

DIMITRI

You are the model of a proprietor.

STARSCHENSKI

Therefore give me your report, Timoska. You see, he is my right hand. For long days we two wander through my fields and forests and farmsteads.

GRISCHKA

An old saying: the eye of the master makes the cow fat.

DIMITRI

And the serf thin — aye.

STARSCHENSKI

No matter. It is satisfying to fulfill a duty. One sits more merrily at the feast after one's work is done. And Elga will laugh.

GRISCHKA

Yes, she laughs almost too much. But listen, Dimitri, let us go to her.

[*They both bow and withdraw.*

STARSCHENSKI

What are you muttering about, old fellow? Speak clearly to me.

TIMOSKA

My lord, it vexes me.

STARSCHENSKI

What?

TIMOSKA

The blond serf has broken the carriage shaft.

STARSCHENSKI

Have a new one made. Is there nothing else?

TIMOSKA

My lord, it vexes me.

STARSCHENSKI

Hm. Something more?

TIMOSK

Yes, my lord. Something more.

STARSCHENSKI

Has the wheat rotted in the field?

TIMOSKA

No.

STARSCHENSKI

Well, must one draw out your words with pincers? — Did the great storm do much damage?

TIMOSKA

No.

STARSCHENSKI

Did a marten enter our dovecotes, then?

TIMOSKA

My lord, it vexes me. I am glad that you no longer sit morosely, brooding in the darkness. I am glad that we have gained a dear mistress and that you rock a little daughter on your knee. . . .

STARSCHENSKI

[*Impatiently.*] Well, and of what are you *not* glad?

TIMOSKA

You have too many dealings with Pan Dimitri and Pan Grischka.

STARSCHENSKI

Little enough during the past year, it seems to me.

TIMOSKA

It may cost you your possessions and your happiness.

STARSCHENSKI

Listen, old greybeard: you are old and faithful and therefore I forgive you. I will even discuss the thing with you. Whatever Pan Grischka and Pan Dimitri do is their affair. I cannot be the guardian of their souls. As for me: I am the king's loyal servant and I plough my land. But now tell me: what makes you speak of that?

TIMOSKA

They come too often.

STARSCHENSKI

Who comes too often?

TIMOSKA

Pan Dimitri and Pan Grischka.— The peasants in the village know it.

STARSCHENSKI

It is nine months since they visited me for the last time.

TIMOSKA

The peasants tell a different story.

STARSCHENSKI

Then they are fools.

TIMOSKA

My lord, with these eyes I have seen . . .

STARSCHENSKI

What have you seen?

TIMOSKA

I have seen the secret messenger come and go by night.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Astonished and shocked.*] A secret messenger comes and goes? Whence comes he? Whither goes he?

TIMOSKA

Through the same little gate.

STARSCHENSKI

Out in the garden? Near the old tower?

TIMOSKA

The same by which Pan Grischka and Pan Dimitri entered to-day.

STARSCHENSKI

Who has the key to the little gate and the tower?

TIMOSKA

Pani Elga.

STARSCHENSKI

In the name of . . .! Go! Stop your chattering!

[*With a deep bow* TIMOSKA *withdraws.*

THE VOICE OF ELGA

Starschenski, my falcon, come!

STARSCHENSKI

[*Stands still. His mind is far away.*

ELGA

[*Enters.*] Did you not hear me call?

STARSCHENSKI

[*As though awakening.*] Did you call me?

ELGA

What? Have you been dreaming?

STARSCHENSKI

[*With a tormented sigh.*] A nightmare!

ELGA

What was it, poor sleep walker?

STARSCHENSKI

Kiss me!

ELGA

[*Amid passionate kisses.*] There, there and there! Would you have more?

STARSCHENSKI

Look at me.

ELGA

Well? [*Firmly and freely she meets his glance.*] What is it?

STARSCHENSKI

[*After a deep and searching glance.*] Nothing.

ELGA

What ails you?

STARSCHENSKI

[*Relieved.*] Nothing! It is well. [*He kisses her forehead.*]

THE THIRD SCENE

The stage is transformed into a sleeping-chamber. ELGA *is busy at her toilet table.* THE NURSE *with the sleeping child in her arms is beside her. It is near eleven o'clock at night.*

ELGA

Go, nurse, go out carefully with the child. I would not have you sleep with him in the adjoining room to-night either. Dortka will help you carry the cradle into the yellow room. I am terribly tired and would not be disturbed during the night.

THE NURSE

Ah, mistress, there is no need. I know the child. I know beforehand when she will be restless. To-night she will lie all night in her little bed as silent as a little fish.

ELGA

It doesn't matter. Do as I tell you.

THE NURSE

Surely I will do that. Must I not as an obedient servant? She wakes up! Come little monkey, come. You open your eyes wide. Look how your dear mother adorns herself. Little stars on her breast! Beautiful, red, glimmering stones in her ears.

ELGA

[*Absorbed before the mirror.*] Oh, are you still there? Go! Hurry away!

[*The* NURSE *withdraws with the child.*

ELGA

[*Sings to herself.*

"I, a wild bird, fare onward
Upon my way.
I am a gleaming falcon,
I am a swan-white falcon!
I sail beneath the sun, I sail
On high above my shadow:
Deep, deep below, my shadow,
My shadow fares with me."

Who is without there? Dortka, is it you?

[DORTKA, *her maid, enters.*

DORTKA

Yes, mistress.

ELGA

Has the count ridden out?

DORTKA

Yes, mistress, he is gone. I heard him say to the overseer: I have many things to attend to: I shall pass the night in the city.

ELGA

He mounts his horse and rides away and does not even bid me good-night. [*Lightly.*] Never mind.

DORTKA

I heard him tell the overseer to give you his greeting.

ELGA

Timoska?

DORTKA

Yes.

ELGA

What a messenger of love!

DORTKA

Shaky enough he is.

ELGA

I have hung rubies in my ears. Is it right so?

DORTKA

You do not need them. You have rubies on your lips.

ELGA

Ah, how poetical! Do you write verses, perhaps, Dortka?

DORTKA

No. At least, not good verses. Pan Oginski writes much better ones.

ELGA

How do you know that?

DORTKA

Did you not just recently read me one of his poems?

ELGA

Which one?

DORTKA

It was all about a falcon, or something like that.

ELGA

Is it not beautiful? Listen!

DORTKA

I hear nothing. Did you hear anything?

ELGA

I thought I heard the garden gate creak.

DORTKA

It cannot creak. I myself poured oil on the hinges.

ELGA

Has mother gone to bed?

DORTKA

Yes.

ELGA

Pani Marina is good and full of peace. My mother was not so. But she was very beautiful.

DORTKA

As beautiful as you?

ELGA

Oh, Dortka, I am as nothing compared to her. So beautiful was my mother. For an hundred miles in all directions people called her the beautiful one.— Once I saw something terrible, Dortka. We used to have a serf who carried me about on his shoulders — often, very often. . . . His bones were like the bones of a mammoth, but his soul was like the small soul of a little singing bird.— One morning he hanged himself at my mother's door.

DORTKA

The fool! Did he dare lift his eyes to his mistress?

ELGA

Do you have this thing happen to you, too, Dortka?

DORTKA

What?

ELGA

That, toward evening, memories come to you of your dreams of the previous night? All day the visions are gone. Suddenly something of them floats past the soul.

DORTKA

Do you know that you cried out last night?

ELGA

No.

DORTKA

It was an echoing cry, sharp as a knife. It awakened me. And it seemed strange, so unlike you.

ELGA

One should not dream. One should not dream at all. I saw something that was black and many lights and a dead man, I believe. One often sees dead people in one's dreams.

DORTKA

That means happiness.

ELGA

The night is so bright, Dortka. The moon is terribly bright. It is almost like day.

DORTKA

But the great chestnut trees are covered with leaves. They afford a deep shade. It was much worse in the winter.

ELGA

All the trees are now covered with leaves and with blossoms. Not only the chestnuts. How sweet is the fragrance of the lilacs! Ah, Dortka! Dortka! . . .

DORTKA

Aye, mistress?

ELGA

I love him so!

DORTKA

God knows that you love him.

ELGA

[*With sudden haste.*] But, Dortka, I don't wish him to come to-night! Let him not come! Go, tell him. . . . Hasten and tell him! Go, Dortka! I am afraid to have him come.

DORTKA

What troubles you to-day? Why do you tremble? Why do you fear? Everything is in deep quiet. Is this the first time, mistress? Do I not know how you have cursed the minutes because they crept so slowly until they reached to-day? Everything has come about as we desired. The master is in Warsaw. Why are you in dread?

ELGA

What did I say?

DORTKA

You said that he was not to come.

ELGA

Go, Dortka, run as fast as your feet will . . .

DORTKA

Shall I tell him not to come?

ELGA

Are you in your senses? — Dortka!

DORTKA

What?

ELGA

I hear a horse's hoofs.

DORTKA

Some one is galloping away. It is the overseer. His horse stood saddled in the stable. I saw it when I was over there giving brandy to the men and maids.

ELGA

Do you trust the overseer?

DORTKA

No. But old Timoska is deaf and blind, he has neither teeth nor fists. He does not hear or see or bite or thrust.

ELGA

[*Amused, then frightened.*] Look, there is a light over yonder, a light!

DORTKA

You are right. There is a light in the old tower.

ELGA

Hurry, give me my fur.

DORTKA

Do you want to go there?

ELGA

What else would you have me do?

DORTKA

He should not light a candle.

[OGINSKI *enters.*

ELGA

How did you get in?

OGINSKI

The little gate was open.

DORTKA

I thought it prudent to leave it so.

OGINSKI

There. Take that.

[*He gives money to* DORTKA *who withdraws.* OGINSKI *and* ELGA *rush into each other's arms.*

ELGA

Why did you not come to me for so long?

OGINSKI

I do not know. I have wandered about on lonely field-paths and through the gorges in the forests, always solitary, quite solitary. And yet I was with you.

ELGA

What does that avail me? If you are absent, you are wholly absent. When you are away and say that you are with me, nevertheless, you are not really with me.

OGINSKI

Then come! Come with me! Why did you stay here? Why did you not follow me?

ELGA

Dear babbler! Kiss me!

OGINSKI

[*Kisses her passionately. Then with insistence.*] Why do you not flee with me?

ELGA

Whither?

OGINSKI

I have inherited a little money from the Starost Laschek; you know that. We can go to a foreign land. We could be happy there.

ELGA

Am I to wash shirts and stockings?

OGINSKI

I will work for you. I will learn to need no sleep and work for you day and night.

ELGA

[*Holds her hand over his mouth.*] No, no, my friend. That is folly.

OGINSKI

Then you do not love me any longer?

ELGA

[*Shakes her head with a tragic smile.*

OGINSKI

Then let us put an end to it all.

ELGA

Oginski!

OGINSKI

Well, all this leads us no whither. It is so futile. You do not love me: you love Starschenski. He is your husband. Very well. That is as it should be.

ELGA

I do not love Starschenski.

OGINSKI

But you do not love me either. Elga, they tell me that your days, when I am gone, are passed amid joy and laughter. That you are happy and that you dance. They tell me that you are tireless in the dance and that all feasts are too brief for you.— Elga! Elga, do not weep!

[*He kisses the tears from her eyes.*

ELGA

Ah . . . love . . . let be! It is nothing.— Starschenski is going to invite you to visit the castle. Have you heard?

OGINSKI

No.

ELGA

Will you come?

OGINSKI

[*Seriously and with decision.*] I shall come if he invites me.

ELGA

He will do so.— My brothers were here.

OGINSKI

To ask him for money?

ELGA

I do not know. But I have said to him what you bade me to say: that their undertakings are foolish and their extravagance senseless. He has promised me not to give them another farthing.— [*With inner laughter.*] It was droll . . .

OGINSKI

What was?

ELGA

They spoke of you.

OGINSKI

How did they speak of me?

ELGA

Pityingly.

OGINSKI

They are zanies.

ELGA

One would have thought you a poor, starved sheep and them two lions.

OGINSKI

I am no lion.

ELGA

It sounded as though they had pulled the strings and you had moved the whole time.

OGINSKI

And Starschenski: Does he believe them?

ELGA

He will invite you out of sheer compassion.

OGINSKI

And yet I shall come.

ELGA

No, do not come!

OGINSKI

Why not?

ELGA

[*With crushing remorse.*] It will make me more evil than I am — if you come here.

[DORTKA *hastens in.*

DORTKA

Away, away, Pan Oginski! They are searching throughout the garden.

OGINSKI

Who?

DORTKA

They have seen a light in the old tower.

[OGINSKI *jumps out of the window.*

[DORTKA *runs out.* ELGA, *now alone, hastens first to the window, then to the door. Suddenly* DORTKA *is heard to give a scream and, still screaming, is led in by* STARSCHENSKI.

STARSCHENSKI

Confess!

DORTKA

What do you want me to confess?

STARSCHENSKI

Confess, wench! And woe to you if you lie! It would mean your death.

ELGA

[*Suddenly and vehemently.*] What do you want of her? What has she done?

STARSCHENSKI

I want her to tell me that. Confess, harlot! Who was the man? Where is he? Timoska! Come in here! Have no fear. I command you! Who was the man? He slipped out through the little gate. We saw him unmistakeably. Both I and the overseer saw the man.

ELGA

The overseer, the overseer. Always the overseer. Let him guard the serfs and the maids!

Let him not concern himself with the affairs of his mistress. Or have you given the overseer power not only over your stables but also over your wife?

STARSCHENSKI

Elga!

ELGA

What is it?

STARSCHENSKI

You are so strange.

ELGA

The mother sleeps and the child. Why do you come raising a mad hue and cry that awakens all the folk in the castle?

STARSCHENSKI

I will not have harlots in my house! Nor would I have the enemies of the king find a hiding-place here. My shield is untarnished and my house is to be clean: no thieves' meeting-place, no shelter for night-birds. Therefore confess, wench! or else — out with you! And, Timoska, send the dogs to hasten her steps!

ELGA

[*With wild energy.*] She is my servant. You shall not do it.

STARSCHENSKI

What am I not to do?

ELGA

You shall never drive her forth!

STARSCHENSKI

As sure as there is God I will . . .

ELGA

Never! Or you must drive me forth, too. I would rather live in poverty than be the humble servant of your serfs. Bid the overseer go.

STARSCHENSKI

Elga!

ELGA

Let me be.

STARSCHENSKI

Come to yourself.

ELGA

Then do not provoke me more! Dortka! Here is your place! [*She pulls* DORTKA *out of* STARSCHENSKI's *grasp over to herself.*] Go in there!

[*Weeping* DORTKA *withdraws under* ELGA's *protection.*

ELGA

[*More calmly and firmly.*] Dortka belongs to me. I am her judge.— If you would wound me further, at least wait until morning. Until then, at least, grant my limbs a little sleep and rest.

[*She follows* DORTKA *and can be heard locking the door behind her.*

TIMOSKA

[*To* STARSCHENSKI *who stands rigid, lost in his thoughts.*

Pan Starschenski! Pan Starschenski! — Will you not go to rest, Pan Starschenski?

THE FOURTH SCENE

The dining hall of STARSCHENSKI'S *castle, shortly before sunrise. In an armchair in front of a high window sits* STARSCHENSKI *dressed as on the previous evening, in a state of dull and troubled brooding.*

Two serving men who do not see STARSCHENSKI *are about to set the room in order.*

FIRST SERVINGMAN

What happened during the night?

SECOND SERVINGMAN

I was asleep.

FIRST SERVINGMAN

The master raised an alarm and the overseer was up and about all night.

SECOND SERVINGMAN

[*Observes* STARSCHENSKI.] Sh! What does that mean?

FIRST SERVINGMAN

St. Anthony of Krakau!

SECOND SERVINGMAN

It is the master.

STARSCHENSKI

[*His attention aroused.*] What are you doing?

FIRST SERVINGMAN

Sweeping the hall, my lord, and preparing the table for breakfast.

STARSCHENSKI

Hm. Do so.— You there!

FIRST SERVINGMAN

At your service, my lord.

STARSCHENSKI

Bid the overseer come to me.

[*The* SERVINGMAN *withdraws,* STARSCHENSKI *sinks back into his brooding thought. The* OVERSEER *enters.*

TIMOSKA

[*Calling* STARSCHENSKI'S *attention gently to himself.*] My lord. . . . You had me summoned, my lord.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Looks at him without recognition.*] Hm.— Yes.

TIMOSKA

You sent for me, my lord.

STARSCHENSKI

Ah yes. Timoska! Come hither. [*He takes his hand.*] What did I want to tell you, Timoska? That is it! I want to go to Warsaw.

TIMOSKA

At your service, my lord. I will cause the gray horses to be held in readiness.

STARSCHENSKI

Go! — Are you there, Timoska?

TIMOSKA

Yes, my lord.

STARSCHENSKI

Summon me a physician.

TIMOSKA

Are you ill, my lord?

STARSCHENSKI

I believe so. It must be that I am ill. I am cold. Bring me my furs.

TIMOSKA

You should lie down again, Pan: you should go to bed.

STARSCHENSKI

[*While the furs are being laid across his shoulders.*] I want to go to Warsaw.

TIMOSKA

[*Softly to the servants.*] Start a fire in the chimney. Hurry! His lordship is cold. And have the samovar brought in in order that our Pan may have hot tea at once.

STARSCHENSKI

Bring tea! Yes. The furs are comforting.— Why am I here? Was I not in bed at all?

TIMOSKA

No, my lord.

STARSCHENSKI

Why not? — Go!

[TIMOSKA *withdraws.*

[STARSCHENSKI *has arisen and, driven by his disquieting thoughts, walks up and down. A* SERVINGMAN *brings the samovar, pours out the tea and* STARSCHENSKI *drinks.*

STARSCHENSKI

[*Having drunk.*] Waken Pani Marina, and say I beg her to see me.

FIRST SERVINGMAN

Pani Marina is just returning from church.

[MARINA *enters.*

STARSCHENSKI

[*With forced naturalness.*] Good morning, mother.

MARINA

God's blessing on you, my son.

STARSCHENSKI

Aye, God's blessing. Come, sit down. Sit down and drink tea. Let us sit down together. Bring lights! It shall be bright about us. Bring lights! So, mother. It is long since we two sat alone together thus.

MARINA

A long time, my dear son. It is not my fault. I never miss early mass. But you children go to bed late and rise late. It is not my fault.

STARSCHENSKI

I know.

MARINA

It is more the fault of you, my children. But you look pale. What ails you?

STARSCHENSKI

Nothing.— How long is it since we have sat at breakfast thus?

MARINA

Almost two years.

STARSCHENSKI

One can mount a ladder and then descend it again. Is that not true?

MARINA

I think that is true, my dear son. Why do you ask?

STARSCHENSKI

Because there is such a thing as a ladder that one can only mount, mother. I have climbed very high on this ladder. So high that I no longer saw the earth. Whoever would descend from such a ladder would be crushed by his fall.

MARINA

Why? We are all in God's hand.

STARSCHENSKI

You ask why? Because when one ascends, the rungs are of ivory. Try to descend and they change into glowing iron.

MARINA

If that be true one would fall.

STARSCHENSKI

Aye, mother. Fall and lie mangled at the foot.

MARINA

What is that strange, tall ladder that you are talking about?

STARSCHENSKI

[*With a deep, involuntary moan.*] I could not live as I lived once upon a time. I could not live at the foot. . . .

MARINA

You are strange to-day.— Come! I would not ask you after the source of your anxiety. But trust in God. Behold even now the sun arises behind your fields. Listen to the birds in your gardens and above your fields praise God and the spring time. Fill your heart with the new morning and play the man, my son.— Or are you ill?

STARSCHENSKI

They praise God and they praise the spring-time, mother. It is a sound of joy which may sound to human ears like the jeers of hell.— I could nevermore live below there.

MARINA

What is it you mean?

STARSCHENSKI

Look, mother: not all who see the spring do truly see it. Many imagine that they see the

spring who see it not. I will not be able to make it clear to you. But herein lies the secret of life. I know, I know that it sounds confused . . . and God chooses, ah, so few for his vision. No one can speak of the miracle of spring who knows not that . . . who has not experienced that, mother. He alone who knows and has felt it — he hears God laugh.— [*The bright and serene laughter of* Elga *is heard in the adjoining room.* Starschenski *grows pale, rises and puts his hand over his heart.*] Mother . . .

Marina

You are seriously ill, my son. We must have a physician summoned. At once! You are hot. A fever is coming upon you!

Starschenski

No physician can help me. Be calm. It is nothing.— It was Elga who laughed, was it not? — Yes, mother mine, it is as I said. It is thus. And not otherwise. So try to bear it, mother. Accustom yourself to the thought.

[Elga *enters. Her demeanor is utterly naïve. She is full of vital energy and joyousness.*

Elga

Good morning, my falcon.— Well?

Marina

Your husband is not well, Elga.

Elga

Not well? Let us see if his wife cannot make him well. It is ugly to be sick. Fy! A sick

man is an ugly man.— [*She nestles on his lap and kisses him.*] Ah! Am I right? Surely, you are well now?

STARSCHENSKI

Elga!

[*He breaks out into nervous, suppressed sobs.*

ELGA

Oh! Oh! And what is this? Starschenski, my hero! And is a hero to weep? A strong man weeps, he sheds tears for no cause — hot, salty tears. Why? — Make your heart firm, strengthen your limbs and then away with me! Carriage or horses, so it be faring through forest and field! I would have man be strong and vigorous, not melancholy and weary! [*As* STARSCHENSKI *embraces her passionately.*] Thus! Now life streams back into him! Aye, press me, kiss me! Draw life from me: I have enough for two.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Changed as by magic.*] Ah mother, turn but your old eyes upon this creature! Is she not beautiful, mother? Is she not beautiful as healing after sickness? She is beautiful and she is mine.

ELGA

Water gives us youth: it refreshes us and lends us beauty! I swam across the lake! Do likewise! And all the sick thoughts will be washed from your soul.

STARSCHENSKI

Stay, mother, stay! I feel free again and happy.

MARINA

If you feel free and well, so do I. But let me go now. I must hasten to the child. She must see me when she wakes up. That is her custom.

STARSCHENSKI

Kiss little Elga good morning for me.

[MARINA *nods and goes out.*

ELGA

[*Has arisen and stands before* STARSCHENSKI.] Is my gown becoming?

STARSCHENSKI

I love you so much . . .

ELGA

She swears it is the latest thing from Paris.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Embracing her again.*] I love you so! I could slay you, I love you so!

ELGA

[*With a touch of impatience.*] You have hurt me again.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Holding both of her arms.*] You are mine — my possession, my precious possesion. You are like a beautiful vessel. There is not another so precious in all the world even though it were carved of onyx or jasper. And from this vessel,

which never grows empty, one drinks the noblest wine.

[*He kisses her.*

ELGA

[*Frees herself from his grasp.*] Dortka is coming.

[DORTKA *enters with some timidity. She places a great bunch of violets on the table, keeping a smaller one in her hand.*

ELGA

That is right.— Place it here.— Well . . .? Adorn your master! — Well . . .?

DORTKA

[*Kneels before* STARSCHENSKI *and kisses his hand.*] Forgive me, my lord.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Accepts the little posy.*] Get up. It is well.

[TIMOSKA *enters.*

TIMOSKA

The carriage is at the door, master.

STARSCHENSKI

A carriage? What carriage, Timoska?

TIMOSKA

You were going to Warsaw, my lord.

ELGA

You were going to Warsaw?

STARSCHENSKI

I am not going now.

ELGA

[*Tweaking* TIMOSKA *gently by the ear.*] You are an old stupid, Timoska! Don't you know that? And you are a hypocrite, too. Were you not young once upon a time? Do you grudge the girl her little sins?— But get the carriage ready now. We shall ride, your master and I. Come, Dortka, put my cloak about me.

[*She goes out and* DORTKA *follows her.*

STARSCHENSKI

[*Has nodded to* ELGA *and now, left alone with* TIMOSKA, *he walks up and down the room. Then he stands still and turns ungraciously upon* TIMOSKA.] Why are you still standing here?

TIMOSKA

Master . . .

STARSCHENSKI

You did me an evil service with your folly.

TIMOSKA

Punish me, Pan!

STARSCHENSKI

I should punish you, yes, it is true. You make me ridiculous. Should I, the master, spy upon the love affairs of my maids and men?

TIMOSKA

No, master.

STARSCHENSKI

Very well, then! I know that at bottom your intention was good. But you are not to annoy me with such follies in future. Do you hear me?

TIMOSKA

I hear you, master.— Are we to sow the oats to-day?

STARSCHENSKI

Do as seems well to you.

[TIMOSKA *goes out. The* NURSE *comes in carrying* LITTLE ELGA *on her arms.*

STARSCHENSKI

Come in! Come in!

THE NURSE

We are looking for mother.

STARSCHENSKI

Little Elga will be satisfied with me.— [*He takes the child into his arms.*]— What does she hold in her hand?

LITTLE ELGA

Atti, atti!

THE NURSE

She means father.

STARSCHENSKI

What has she in her hand, nurse?

THE NURSE

It is my lady's jewel box, my lord. She will not give it up.

[MARINA *enters.*

STARSCHENSKI

Look, mother, what a magnificent toy little Elga has.

MARINA

So that's where you two vanished! One might search and search . . .

STARSCHENSKI

Little Elga is rich. There, take her, mother.

[*He places her into his mother's arms.*

MARINA

She has a bride's jewels.

STARSCHENSKI

[*His face darkening for a moment.*] I shall never give little Elga to any man.

[LITTLE ELGA *lets the case drop from her hand.*

MARINA

Hurry, nurse, and pick it up!

STARSCHENSKI

[*Cheerfully.*] The bridal jewels are being broken. [*He picks up the case, looks into it, turns the contents over with his finger and suddenly discovers something which he takes out.*] What is that?

MARINA

What have you there? What was in it?

STARSCHENSKI

[*Turning the color of clay.*] Nothing.

MARINA

What is it that ails you again?

[*She gives the child to the nurse who is about to carry it out of the room.*

STARSCHENSKI

Stay a little, nurse. Stand here with the child. And now stand still.

[*He compares a little medallion picture which he holds in his hand with the features of the child.*

MARINA

What are you doing there?

STARSCHENSKI

Come and look! — Do you know this likeness?

MARINA

No.

STARSCHENSKI

Do you know the man whose face it shows?

MARINA

I do not know him, my son.

STARSCHENSKI

Compare the two!

MARINA

What am I to compare?

STARSCHENSKI

Little Elga's eyes and — these eyes! Her brow and — this! Her hair and this — hair!

Her chin, her mouth and — this mouth! Do you know the man?

MARINA

No. Yes. Perhaps. Perhaps it is her cousin Oginski.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Terribly changed and almost stammering.*] Well . . . what does . . . Ah, let me be! . . . It will pass over. . . . To be sure, yes, it is Oginski.— I recognise him now — the cousin and beggar and cowardly sneak! The evil, creeping, stinking cur! Let be . . . let be! I thought you were sending for a physician! . . . I am being throttled. .

MARINA

God above!

STARSCHENSKI

[*With enforced composure and yet half maddened.*] Be calm, mother, be calm. Come and sit down by me. And tell me, tell me. I beg of you, for you know more than I. You knew the Starost of Laschek. How is it with this cousin Oginski? Why should she keep his picture?

MARINA

Do calm yourself first! Moderate your tone. The nurse is here with the child.

STARSCHENSKI

What is the child to me? — Away! Out with you! [*The* NURSE *hastens out with the child.*] O mother, pray for me! Bind me fast! Or, by the Saviour, I shall murder my child.

MARINA

May God in his mercy help you, my son! What ails you? What has happened to you?

STARSCHENSKI

[*Dry, hard, trembling.*] I suppose that I have a fever, as you say. Never mind that. It seems past. But, mother, stay: there is one thing I must know — in order that it may grow clear in my soul. Tell me about this cousin Oginski.

MARINA

What can I tell you? You know all I know. He was in the house of the old Starost. He and Elga grew up together. I know no more.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Rises and pulls the bell-rope.*] You know no more.— But I must know more! I must know everything — everything! [TIMOSKA *enters.*] I am going to Warsaw as was decided. [TIMOSKA *withdraws again.*— *To* MARINA.] Farewell. [*He hastens out.*]

[MARINA *shakes her head as she looks after her son.* ELGA *comes in ready to drive out.*

ELGA

I am ready. Where is the count?

MARINA

He has gone to Warsaw, my child.

ELGA

[*Astonished at the strangeness of this.*] What? Why?

THE FIFTH SCENE

A hall in the castle. It is evening. MARINA *sits near the light with her embroidery frame.* ELGA *walks slowly up and down.*

ELGA

I do not understand what he is doing in Warsaw. This is the third day.

MARINA

I do not understand it either.

ELGA

Nor that he took Timoska with him.

MARINA

It is not well that he did so. The peasants come and ask that their work be assigned them. One does not know what to answer them.

ELGA

And the time drags so frightfully. You see, mother, I am so easily bored. And I fear that sense of tedium as though it were a great, drowsy monster with sleepy eyes and lazy, open mouth. Ugh!

MARINA

Time never hangs heavily on my hands, my child.

ELGA

I do not understand that.

MARINA

You see, in my old home it was different from the ways of yours. My father was strict. At home I spent my time doing what I had to do — never what I desired to. I had to climb three fences to catch a feather that the breeze had caught. And so the day was always too short. But you always did at home what you desired, and usually you desired to do nothing. And so that feeling came over you.

ELGA

Yes. But why should one will, mother?

MARINA

Because it is our duty.

ELGA

I do not understand that. Several times I have toiled up steep mountains. Something lured me up the ascent . . . I wanted to be nearer the sun and the sky and God. I felt that. But if I had not willed it, mother, I would surely have staid below. I do not climb a mountain because I should: unless this boredom were to lash me.

MARINA

You Laschcks are a race of another sort: self-willed, light of soul, every ready to venture everything.— And that is, too, why you lost all.

ELGA

And won it again.

MARINA

You did perhaps.

ELGA

To be sure — I.

MARINA

And you may lose it again.

ELGA

To be sure I may. The way goes up and down, up and down and meanders too. That is better than to live always on the same plane and upon a straight line. The monster ennui is as rigid as a crocodile: it can follow you but ill up hill and down dale. Nor can it turn with ease.

MARINA

[*With an anxious upward glance from her work.*] Have you no love of quiet happiness at all?

ELGA

Very little.

MARINA

Whoever lives as you do is constantly in great danger.

ELGA

That is just it. That is what makes life worth living. Death walks almost visibly at one's side and drives one deeper and deeper into life. It is now cold, now hot! One has now horror, now happiness.

MARINA

Do not speak so. For the love of God! You must not speak so of death.

ELGA

Death and I are very good friends, much better friends than you can imagine. He does not spoil my temper nearly as much as he does yours. Those days when I stood by my father's sickbed in Warsaw, without bread, without money, in a wretched hole — I called upon death and recognized him. And do you know what he taught me, mother? He taught me how to laugh! He taught me to laugh at many, many of the serious things of life.— But never mind! I am still in love with life.— If only Starschenski would come home.

MARINA

There comes Timoska.

TIMOSKA

[*To* MARINA.] Good evening, my lady.

MARINA

Where is your master?

TIMOSKA

He sent me ahead, mistress. I was to give a message.

MARINA

What message were you to give? But catch your breath first.

TIMOSKA

A guest is coming with the master. They are

hungry and thirsty. I am to say that he desires the board to be prepared for them.

MARINA

Praise be to God if it be nothing worse! Did you have to frighten us so for that?

ELGA

Who is the guest?

TIMOSKA

[*Warily and observant.*] I do not know him.

ELGA

Who can it be, mother?

MARINA

I would ask that of you. It has never been his custom. But let the guest be welcome so he be cheerful. He may brighten the hours for us.

[TIMOSKA *withdraws.*

MARINA

A carriage is drawing up. They are here now. I recognize my son's step.

ELGA

[*Turning pale.*] You recognize the step of your son?

MARINA

Go to meet him. I shall stay here.

ELGA

No, little mother. Do you go.

[MARINA *goes out to meet her son. From the other side* DORTKA *comes in hastily and excitedly.*

DORTKA

[*With an outburst of secret joy.*] Do you know who is coming, mistress? Do you know who is coming up the stairs with his lordship, the count?

ELGA

Hush! I know!

STARSCHENSKI'S VOICE

Elga, my dove!

ELGA

Away! He must not see you here.

[DORTKA *hurries out.*

[STARSCHENSKI *enters.*

STARSCHENSKI

[*Changed from his usual self, visibly excited by drink and passion.*] Good evening, my dove.

ELGA

You were gone long.

STARSCHENSKI

Yes. But do not scold me. I have brought something for you.

ELGA

What did you bring for me?

STARSCHENSKI

Guess!

ELGA

The silken shifts for which I asked you.

STARSCHENSKI

Yes, there are silken shifts in the carriage. I have picked out the costliest. But I have brought something else in addition. Guess what!

ELGA

I asked you for nothing else. I cannot guess.

STARSCHENSKI

I have brought your cousin Oginski —!

ELGA

[*Laughing with apparent incredulousness and playfully tapping his cheek.*] Ah, you big silly!

STARSCHENSKI

[*Uncertain of himself.*] Are you not happy?

ELGA

What am I to be so happy about? The coming of my cousin Oginski?

STARSCHENSKI

Yes. The coming of Oginski.

ELGA

Did I not tell you my opinion of him? But since he is here now, unless you are merely jesting, what is one to do? He may be here or not. I cannot change it.

STARSCHENSKI

Come in, dear cousin! But do not huddle against the walls.

[OGINSKI *enters.*

OGINSKI

When was I ever known to do that? Your lordship is pleased to jest.— I am your servant, countess.

ELGA

Good evening, cousin.

STARSCHENSKI

Forgive me, Pan Oginski. I do not know how it occurred to me. This manor is very ancient. And especially the walls about the stairs are always damp and soggy and poisonous. And I was afraid for your costly new coat.— Come, sit down. Be my guest and my friend! — How have you fared, my dove, since I have been gone? Did you long for me? She is lonely for me, Pan Oginski. She holds me tethered as children do a goldfinch. If I but go half a verst out into the fields, she yearns for me. Is it not so, my dove?

ELGA

You are talking folly, Starschenski.

STARSCHENSKI

Do I talk folly? It may well be. We two were a bit wild in Warsaw. Were we not, Oginski? But we became friends.

ELGA

Listen! You should not drink any more wine to-night.

STARSCHENSKI

Why not?

ELGA

Trust me. You should not drink any more wine to-night.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Putting his arm about* ELGA.] Is she not beautiful, Oginski?

ELGA

Let me be.

STARSCHENSKI

Is not her mouth as sweet and delicate as the mouth of a child . . .

ELGA

You are to let me be.

STARSCHENSKI

. . . and also as chaste? It is a dangerous mouth! Look how it twitches, that dangerous mouth, Oginski! Fare forth through all of Poland and Russia, through all the towns and steppes and forests of Asia, and you will find no mouth as sweet as this and as seductive.

ELGA

Let me go! Forgive him, cousin.— You are drunk!

[ELGA *goes out.*

OGINSKI

You are not kind to your wife.

STARSCHENSKI

No.

OGINSKI

You should be kinder to your wife.

STARSCHENSKI

I should chastise my wife with rods.

OGINSKI

Hm.—Why am I here? — People have told me many things of you. At times, too, Elga's brothers have spoken of you: I always thought you were a gentleman.

STARSCHENSKI

And what is it that I thought of you? What are you really? I do not know it!

OGINSKI

Let all that be, Pan Starschenski. I did wrong to follow you. What am I to do here? I have never loved my kind. Why did you drag me forth from my obscurity? Therefore — farewell.

STARSCHENSKI

No, Pan Oginski, I shall not let you go.

OGINSKI

What would you have of me?

STARSCHENSKI

I would have your friendship.

OGINSKI

That is not true.

STARSCHENSKI

So help me God, it is. Sit down, friend! Drink this wine. It is most excellent. I am different now. Forgive me. Forgive me if I behaved ungently. Drink and forgive.

OGINSKI

There is nothing to forgive, Pan.

STARSCHENSKI

Then tell me one thing. Drink and tell me one thing: You knew Elga from her childhood on?

OGINSKI

Yes.

STARSCHENSKI

You played together when you were children.

OGINSKI

She played with me.

STARSCHENSKI

She was fond of you.

OGINSKI

Perhaps.

STARSCHENSKI

And you of her?

OGINSKI

No. For she was not lovable.

STARSCHENSKI

You were not fond of Elga?

OGINSKI

I am telling you the truth.

STARSCHENSKI

She was not beautiful?

OGINSKI

No, Pan.

STARSCHENSKI

You lie, Pan!

OGINSKI

[*Rises.*

STARSCHENSKI

Stay. Sit down.

OGINSKI

It is enough.

STARSCHENSKI

Elga is beautiful. Say that she is beautiful.

OGINSKI

It is enough.

STARSCHENSKI

I could kill you — and kiss you — if you do not lie! Give me your hand. Brother, give me your hand.

OGINSKI

What would you have?

STARSCHENSKI

I have called you a liar. Forgive me!

OGINSKI

We all lie.

STARSCHENSKI

So you were lying just now?

OGINSKI

[*Coldly.*] I did not say that.

STARSCHENSKI

Beware!— Or, have mercy!
[*He lets his head fall on the table and groans.*

OGINSKI

[*Rises. With cruel coldness.*] What does mercy avail you, my lord? To receive compassion is to suffer tenfold pain. I have felt this tenfold pain. Were God to show compassion unto him who succumbs, he were not a God of mercy and loving kindness. Ask no compassion, Pan.

STARSCHENSKI

[*Gathering his inner strength. Firmly.*] I do not ask it.

[ELGA *reënters, richly dressed.*

ELGA

[*Lightly.*] I hope you are sober again, my friend?

STARSCHENSKI

I think I am. Come and chat with us.

ELGA

Very well. The table is being spread; we shall be called presently. What kind of wine have you there?

STARSCHENSKI

Taste it.

ELGA

How have you been passing your life since last we saw each other, Oginski?

STARSCHENSKI

[*Quickly.*] How long is that?

ELGA

[*To* OGINSKI.] Well, tell him: how long ago?

OGINSKI

I do not count the days. They come and go. It matters little to me.

ELGA

And so you felt no longing at all for your old playmate? Do you remember the old days, Oginski? I ran more swiftly than you boys; I could leap farther. In your wars I was your leader. I was your master. You had to follow me and bend to my will — all of you! Oh, how merry that was!

OGINSKI

[*Repelled.*] I beg of you to let me be. I cannot laugh and be merry.

STARSCHENSKI

What does it matter? Neither can I. She laughs and is merry for us.— I must tell you of a dream I had. I dreamed of a woman. Yes. That was my dream. The woman was naked and

she danced all night . . . she danced and danced and danced before me to the point of torment.— But now mark upon what the woman danced: Imagine a chalk-white moon — a pallid, ghastly moon that had whitened in horror and shone over a wide, an endlessly wide and mountainous land. In this great, hilly land that was like a sea petrified under a storm, there grew no blade of grass, no tree or bush. And in my dream it seemed to me as though the mountains had been built and the valleys filled with the bones and the skulls of men. And over these the woman danced.

ELGA

Ugh! You have strange dreams. They make me shudder. Stop.

OGINSKI

But the dream has not been told to its end, Pan.

STARSCHENSKI

Then do you finish it. You tell us the rest.

OGINSKI

I have no skill in speech.

ELGA

He begs you and I beg you. Speak.

OGINSKI

Very well, then. Listen: I, like yourself, saw the woman dancing over the skulls. She was beautiful . . .

STARSCHENSKI

Beautiful — like Elga.

OGINSKI

She was beautiful and she was naked.

STARSCHENSKI

And her body was like Elga's body.

OGINSKI

But her eyes were the strangest things about her. From them there shone at times a light that darkened the moon. And then again there streamed forth from them death and night. She had eyes —

STARSCHENSKI

Like Elga's eyes . . .

ELGA

It is enough — enough!

OGINSKI

And these eyes of which I speak could make the valleys and the hills to be green with their glance — and the brooks to flow and birch-trees to blossom into fragrance . . .

STARSCHENSKI

Yes. Thus it was.

OGINSKI

Yet that same glance of theirs could pierce the heart like poison.

ELGA

[*Rises and goes out slowly.*] Your stories make me freeze. Good night!

STARSCHENSKI

[*Alone with* OGINSKI *rises with an air of sombre solemnity.*] Pan Oginski, I think we had better settle our affairs, too.

OGINSKI

Aye. To-day or to-morrow — it matters little to me.

STARSCHENSKI

I think it will be to-day. [*Significantly.*] And so, good night.

OGINSKI

[*In the same manner.*] Good night.

STARSCHENSKI

You will not see the dawning of to-morrow's sun, Oginski.

OGINSKI

[*With bitter irony.*] Neither will you, Pan.

STARSCHENSKI

It may be so. But you will die a shameful death.

OGINSKI

And you will live a shameful life.

STARSCHENSKI

It may be so. Yet I would not pass judgment upon you on no more than a suspicion . . .

OGINSKI

Be not troubled on that account.

STARSCHENSKI

She has rested in your arms?

OGINSKI

[*In open triumph.*] I have lived!

STARSCHENSKI

It is well. [*He strikes the table thrice with his sword.* TIMOSKA *and armed men appear.*] Do your work.

[*He goes out. The armed men bind* OGINSKI *in fetters and drag him swiftly away. The room remains empty and there is a pause. Then* DORTKA *hurries in, in extreme terror.*

DORTKA

Mistress! Mistress! Pani Elga!

[ELGA *comes in.*

ELGA

Dortka, why do you scream so?

DORTKA

It is well, Pani Elga, that I meet you.

ELGA

Why is it well?

DORTKA

Back in the garden where the old tower stands . . . Look, there is a light in it.

ELGA

What more?

DORTKA

Men are going about with lanterns.

ELGA

What are they doing there?

DORTKA

Armed men!

ELGA

Oh, you are dreaming.

[STARSCHENSKI *has entered suddenly and keeps his eyes fixed on* ELGA. *His face is of a death-like pallor.*

ELGA

Pan Starschenski, what does this mean?

STARSCHENSKI

It means nothing.

ELGA

Then good night. We can talk to-morrow.

STARSCHENSKI

You cannot sleep now, Elga. You must take your cloak and go with me.

ELGA

You are drunken with folly.

STARSCHENSKI

Drunken with folly. Not bad! Go Dortka. Seek Timoska and ask him whether he has exe-

cuted his master's command. Then bring me his answer.

[DORTKA *goes.*

STARSCHENSKI

Arise, Elga, and follow me.

ELGA

I shall not do that: I shall not follow you.

STARSCHENSKI

You will not?

ELGA

No.

STARSCHENSKI

Then stay and tell me one thing . . .

ELGA

You have turned into a madman. I do not know wherefore —

STARSCHENSKI

Perhaps on account of you.

ELGA

Then let me go and do you keep what is yours, Starschenski. I had rather live in poverty and in the bitterest wretchedness, than thus!

STARSCHENSKI

I am to keep what is mine? What do you leave me?

ELGA

Whatever you want! You are weary of me. I feel it clearly. I am repulsive to you: let me go.

STARSCHENSKI

To your cousin Oginski?

ELGA

What do you say?

STARSCHENSKI

You would go to your cousin Oginski.

ELGA

— Whither I would go: Very well — it would be for me to decide.

[*She rises and walks about,*

STARSCHENSKI

Deny it if you can. Listen and speak to me: you and Oginski were betrothed when you met me?

ELGA

Do you listen to me too. I am weary of it all. Perhaps Oginski chattered in his cups. Very well: we were children together — he and I. But I tell you we are too old to be children and childish still. So do not plague me with what is past. Do not plague me with Oginski. Or else — let me go!

STARSCHENSKI

So you do not love Oginski any longer? Tell me that one thing: do you love him no longer?

ELGA

Would I have gone with you? Would I have become your wife? I have not always felt at home in your world. There is much in a common childhood, a common world.

STARSCHENSKI

And a common Paradise, perhaps.

ELGA

If you choose — perhaps. Well, I became your wife. What more was needed?

STARSCHENSKI

Do you love me, then?

ELGA

No.— I do not love you now. I do not love you, because you torment and hurt me. But once I went with you and was full of joy with you. I was joyous and happy with you, and joy and happiness, Pan, beget love in me.

STARSCHENSKI

Then come.

ELGA

Whither am I to go with you now? I shall stay here — or go alone. You are ill and should go to a physician. I tell you in honesty and frankness: I am afraid. I am afraid to go with you now.

STARSCHENSKI

Then tell me this one thing: Do you not love Oginski any longer?

ELGA

No. I do not.

STARSCHENSKI

And whether he lives or dies he is indifferent to you?

ELGA

He does not live for me! He does not die for me!

STARSCHENSKI

Then come!

[He has grasped her wrist in an iron grip and leads her out.

THE SIXTH SCENE

The scene changes to the chamber of the first scene in the lonely old tower. To the right and left, before the curtained bed, there are high, gilt candelabra with candles. It is night and moonlight. TIMOSKA *stands before the bed with a long, drawn sword.* DORTKA *enters.*

DORTKA

What a night this is! — Are you there, Timoska?

TIMOSKA

Yes. What do you want?

DORTKA

His lordship, our master, sends me. I am to ask whether you have executed his commands.

TIMOSKA

I have. Go and tell our master: the dead wolf eats no living sheep.— You have nothing more to do here. Why do you linger?

DORTKA

[*Trembling.*] Timoska, what is your plan?

TIMOSKA

Ask the master.

DORTKA

I shiver with horror when I look at you. I do not know why.

TIMOSKA

You have cause to feel horror.

DORTKA

I?

TIMOSKA

Aye, you.

DORTKA

What have I done?

TIMOSKA

You know it well, wench.

DORTKA

Timoska, have pity on me. I do not know it.

TIMOSKA

Did you women have mercy on my master?

DORTKA

On your master, Timoska?

TIMOSKA

What have you made of him? A few days ago he was rich and young and kind; to-day he is old and poor and full of hatred.

DORTKA

And I? You place the guilt on me?

TIMOSKA

Not surely on you alone. But on you and the whole breed. I hate the Lascheks: a curse goes with them.

DORTKA

What have I in common with the Lascheks? I have served my mistress. That is all.

TIMOSKA

She is no mistress. She is a harlot, like yourself.

DORTKA

It is not true. People lie when they say that. You are struck with blindness. It is not true.

TIMOSKA

We know it. She is no mistress. No. She is a demon. She was a harlot when he found her in the streets of Warsaw. Vermin that he gathered up and brought home. I and the Pani Marina knew it. She thrust her hands into his pockets. Her brothers did the same. She is a vampire who sucked the blood from his breast. Away with you now. I hear footsteps. Save your life.

[DORTKA *goes out.*

[STARSCHENSKI *appears in the doorway.*

STARSCHENSKI

[*Speaking to* ELGA *who is still invisible.*] It is nothing. But come up. I admit that it is all because of a trifle. But come up.

ELGA'S VOICE

I shall go no farther.

STARSCHENSKI

You cannot go back. There are armed men at the door. You cannot go back. You risk your life if you turn back without me. Do not be afraid to come. Are you afraid?

[ELGA *enters in a cloak.*

ELGA

[*With firm grimness.*]. No.

STARSCHENSKI

It is cold down there. It is right that you come. It is warmer here. Did you see? The night came with a black frost. Through the whole garden, from the castle here we walked over a white carpet of fallen blossoms. Did you ever go along that way?

ELGA

[*To* TIMOSKA.] Who are you? Who is the man that stands there?

STARSCHENSKI

Come, I will take off your cloak. It is old Timoska. Sit down.— Yes, it is a strange room, with a dull, sultry air. I can well understand that it must seem uncanny to any one who sets foot in it for the first time. It seems as though from the beginning of time ghosts and only ghosts had made their dwelling here. You have never been up here?

ELGA

You know that I have been up here. Why do you ask it?

STARSCHENSKI

I did not know it. How many times have you been up here in this accursed room?

ELGA

[*With sombre defiance.*] Many times.

STARSCHENSKI

And do you know what is behind this curtain?

ELGA

Since I was up here I know what is behind the curtain.

STARSCHENSKI

Then tell me plainly what it is. I ask for a good reason and expect an answer.— You think, perhaps, that there is a bed behind the curtain?

ELGA

Well, is there anything else?

STARSCHENSKI

There is more. Do you know the legend which is told in all the land, in the huts of serfs, in the castles of lords, concerning this chamber and this couch?

ELGA

I do not know it and I do not wish to know it. This is enough. I am going.

STARSCHENSKI

Do not place yourself in danger. I have told you. Timoska will tell you the legend. The old man knows it.

TIMOSKA

[*Begins reading in a slow, loud voice from a parchment.*] In olden times there lived a faithful man and rich count. The count lived in peace to himself with his noble mother. But at last he gave his heart into a woman's keeping . . .

STARSCHENSKI

Have you executed my commands exactly?

TIMOSKA

To the syllable.

STARSCHENSKI

So that not even the last thing remains to be done?

TIMOSKA

No. It is all done and nothing remains.

STARSCHENSKI

Go on with your tale.

TIMOSKA

But she was a nest of adders and no woman. She lied and deceived him who was honorable and without guile. She betrayed him and covered him with shame.

STARSCHENSKI

Where did she do that?

TIMOSKA

[*Points to the bed.*] Here, my lord count.

STARSCHENSKI

You mean upon this bed?

TIMOSKA

Aye.

ELGA

You are both mad. Help! Help!

[*Like a hunted animal she crouches, trembling, against the wall.*

STARSCHENSKI

[*Calmly.*] Pani Elga, be quiet. No evil shall happen to you.— Light the candles.

TIMOSKA

At once, my lord.

[TIMOSKA *lights the candles in the candelabra.*

ELGA

[*Maddened and confused stares at the lighted candles.*] Dortka! Oginski! The night mare is riding me. I would not dream. Waken me, Dortka! The curtain is black! Why did I not see it? I had the dream of the candles once before. Why do you not awaken me? I do not want to dream!

STARSCHENSKI

Be quiet, lady, be quiet. No hurt will be done you. You are not dreaming: you are waking. But do not lie. Do not lie in this terrible hour. You are full of blemishes. You are not pure. And yet: Do you love Oginski no longer: Speak one word.

ELGA

[*Almost whining in the mad extremity of her terror.*] I have spoken the word. You would not believe me.

STARSCHENSKI

By the love of God, if you speak truly you are pure unto me. Then step beside me here — and be my wife.

[*At this moment, the candles being all lit, at a nod from* STARSCHENSKI *the curtains are drawn aside and* OGINSKI *is seen, throttled to death, lying on the bed.* ELGA *who has been about to obey* STARSCHENSKI *and step beside him is petrified by the sight of the dead man. It seems as though he drew her to him, absorbing her will. With dull, stertorious moans she throws herself on the corpse. After a pause* STARSCHENSKI *speaks again in a changed, moved voice.*

STARSCHENSKI

Elga!

ELGA

[*Does not answer.*

STARSCHENSKI

[*More insistently and feelingly.*] Elga!

ELGA

[*Whirls around, full of hatred, like a she-wolf defending her young.*] Do not touch him!

STARSCHENSKI

[*Soothingly, almost beseechingly.*] Elga!

ELGA

[*Draws herself up slowly and shrinks away from him full of hatred and horror and disgust. Then she bursts out.*] I hate you! I spit out upon you!

[*A profound darkness settles over the stage. The soft chorus of the monks is heard as in the first scene. A glimmer of dawn comes in through the window. Gradually the silhouette of the German knight is seen outlined against the roseate sky of dawn. Otherwise the chamber is empty. The black hangings before the bed are drawn aside. There is a knock at the door.*

THE KNIGHT

Who is it? Come in!

THE SERVANT

[*Enters.*] It is time for us to ride away, my lord. We must start.

THE KNIGHT

You are welcome to me, Peter. Let us out and away and ride forth into the bright and living world!

THE SERVANT

Are we to ride away without breakfast? The brothers are at early mass.

THE KNIGHT

Let us ride at once. I would meet none of the brothers again. One of them visited me last night. Out into the morning! To horse and away! I had a heavy dream, heavy as death itself. God have mercy upon us. Long, long shall I remember this night in the monastery.

HELIOS

HELIOS

The kitchen of an ancient keep, level with the earth. An antique, open fireplace with a flue. The Cook *has fallen asleep in the act of turning a chicken on the spit. To the right a low, arched door leads into the open; steps are seen beyond. On these steps sits the young* Minstrel, *ill and ragged. The red of sunset, streaming in through the door, bathes him in its glow, but the darkness in the room is lit but feebly. The* Minstrel *holds a Pan's pipe to his lips. Whenever he has drawn from the pipe a long, soft, lamenting tone he speaks to himself in a dull, dreamy intonation.*

The Minstrel

There is a young king. And something draws him into the darkness. A heavy dream enfolds him. I carry a radiance in my breast and if he would but nourish it with his oil, it would illuminate the night. I carry a song in my soul; it would awaken him. But the young king does not care to hear my song. He has made dumb my singing love — dumb and sick to death.

[*A young* Fisherman *enters. He wears a foolscap on his blond head and carries herrings in his net. His dragging movements show his great weariness.*

THE FISHER

Oho! Are ye still asleep? I bring you fishes. I bring fasting fishes for King Beggar's table. Hallo, cook! Would you have the king starve?

THE COOK

[*Out of his sleep.*] What would you? Let me sleep! I would rather die than drag myself about any more in this poisoned cavern with my half-awake eyes.

THE FISHER

Turn your spit, cook. You will die soon enough. But the last hen has not yet been roasted, nor is your hand still in death.

THE MINSTREL

How late is the time?

THE FISHER

The sun is bleeding to its death in the west. I saw the crane fly nestward through the red of the sky.

THE MINSTREL

It is drawing toward evening. The night is cool and voiceless.

THE FISHER

I think there is still a little time before the night comes. For, behold, the bells on my cap still tinkle a little. To be sure, it has a mouldy odor, but the sharp spray of the sea still holds in check the mildew and the lichens that would corrode it. [*Taking the little fishes from his net.*] Of a truth,

though, when I can go out no more nor catch the little, wriggling, snapping, silvery fishes — that will be the last of my cap.

[The Kitchen Boy *comes in.*

The Fisher

Where do you come from?

The Boy

[*Unable to hold back his secret.*] I have been bathing.

The Fisher

Where?

The Boy

In the sea, near the sacred bathing place! I roused my courage to do it, in spite of the command. I stripped off my garments — in just a trice — under the holy nut tree.— The tree rustled. The air was very grey. Almost fear overwhelmed me, for there was a whispering among the leaves. Ye know . . . high among the branches where they have hung the cross with the image of the bleeding man. But when the foam wet my feet, fear fled from me like a croaking raven. I cried out in my delight and threw myself into the waves. Ho! And as I swam and laughed aloud the sun hurled a bundle of rays through the leaden clouds. And I turned about in the green, crystalline splendor and with loud cries I thanked our mother, the sun. And behold: a tiny, bluish, iridescent water nymph came over the surface of the sea with a low, clear tinkle of small wings and settled sea-sawing on my breast . . .

THE FISHER

Have a care, lad. The high priest has had two gallows erected next to each cross. And the ravens are hungry.

THE BOY

Better far to look through the hempen window than to have nails driven through one's hands and nails through one's feet: better than to be given gall and eysell to drink and have one's side pierced with a spear.

[*To the* FISHER.] What are you doing there?

THE FISHER

I am letting a midge suck my blood and I am looking at it. It is a merry sight to see how it thrusts its long sting into the swollen vein and swells with my life blood. It is a goodly pleasure to watch that. But the greater pleasure follows after. Watch: now it is fat to bursting — now comes my chance. [*He crushes the midge and laughs.*]

THE COOK

Our king is a doomed man.

THE FISHER

We are all doomed. The blood roars in my ears and I often feel sick to death. A fever consumes me. I hear my swift and panting breath wherever I am.

THE COOK

Fy! I say. What sort of shells are those — they smell of the slime, like a pestilence! I am

no mixer of poisons, but a cook — and your fishes stink.

THE FISHER

Aye, old man: do better if you can. Do you think I can venture out into the open sea with these feeble arms of mine? I am glad enough if I can make my wretched shallop drag its way through the canals. Whatever I angle and catch is good enough.

THE MINSTREL

The end is about to be. Death is preparing itself. Does not the black cloud from the East draw athwart the land for months? It is black and terrible and silent. We have forsaken the old gods and are sinning against the new God. The earth will shake and devour us.

[A WARRIOR *in a blue shirt of mail, with a bluish shield, a spear and a sling, enters.*

COOK

Ho, sentinel, what news have you?

THE WARRIOR

I am cold. The coolness and dampness of the night pierce me through and through. First I would get warm. Then I shall tell you.— First a wagon drove across the draw-bridge; six small Russian horses pulled it. Now they are standing yonder in the courtyard. In the guardroom they say that the father confessor of the queen came in the wagon; an old, strange, unknown man and a boy. I know nothing else. I had to go on my rounds.

THE COOK

Our king must be drawing near his end if the queen sends her father confessor. I wonder if any one knows how all this came about?

THE WARRIOR

In the guardroom they tell in whispers that the king's illness came upon him because he feeds a black snake in his private chambers. The snake, they say, feeds on his marrow and drains daily three golden cupfuls of his blood.

THE FISHER

If that be true what you are saying then I would to God that I could see the snake and sacrifice the little strength that is left me and thrust my cap down its gullet. What would it matter? Either the snake would die of it or else my cap would be gone. Then, to be sure, I would have to go to my grave without my cap. But it would amuse me in my grave, yes, in my very grave, to hear the bells of my cap ringing in the belly of the black snake.

THE WARRIOR

I must go out.— Do you know that Russian merchants traveled past here to-day? They are resting yonder by the alder hill. They had slaves and horses for sale — beautiful, pale maidens with great, black eyes and hair like jet. They sat about their fires and related how great peoples were arising and wandering away from the rising of the sun and faring forth toward its setting.

[*He goes out.*

[*There is silence and drowsiness. The*

KITCHEN BOY *shudders. The* MINSTREL *blows long-drawn tones on his pipe and talks between the tones.*

THE MINSTREL

A young king is about to die. He is like a sea-bird — a thousand miles away from his homeland he feels death in his heart. Beating his weary wings he strives homeward — fleeing from the death of exile, seeking with his last strength the death of his land.

[*A door opens in the corner at the left. A beautiful warrior appears — blue of eye, with blond locks, a little pale but full of vigor. He stands on the lowest step of a spiral stairway and whispers to someone behind him. It is* ALF, *the captain of the castle.*

ALF

Step carefully! The stairs are rotten and splintered. [*A sound of laughter answers him.*]

[*He steps forth and immediately a young, slender, golden-cinctured boy comes sliding down the balustrade.*

HELIOS

[*Stands before him and laughs.*] I do it thus! Ugh! Where are we here? It smells here of the water of rinsing and of scraped carrots and sweetishly of fats. Can we not have a light?

ALF

Cook!

HELIOS

Is a cook supposed to be here? This is a lovely hole! Do they cook the meats of a king here?

ALF

Cook! Are ye all asleep again? Guests have come, weary with travel, who would eat and drink.

[*The cook grunts in his sleep.*

HELIOS

[*Stumbles against the* FISHER.] Hallo! What kind of a fellow are you?

THE FISHER

What kind of a fellow I am?

HELIOS

Aye, you can tell me if you would!

THE FISHER

A jester.

HELIOS

You are a sorry jester, it seems to me.

THE FISHER

You have hit my coffin nail square on the head, young gentleman. I am but a sorry jester. Once I owned a goodly portion of wit — a whole net full of small, swarming, stirring, fluttering birds. The loveliest little humming-birds, I assure you! When I let them fly forth — as I did at times — right into the sunlight, it was the prettiest sight, I tell you. Aye, young gentleman, I am telling

you nothing but the truth. If you were to fill those delicate hands of yours with the most beautifully cut stones — green emeralds, carbuncles, rubies, pearls and diamonds — and were to throw them into the air like sand, the gleaming and brilliance and radiance would not be lovelier than was that of my birds.

HELIOS

And what have you done with those dear little birds, as you call them?

THE FISHER

Ah, you see, it is very strange about them. I hardly know how to explain it to you. There came — so to speak — an evil plague. Many died, many were suffocated in the swamp — old age carried the last of them off. And since the sun is angry against our land, he has brooded no new ones for me — only more maggots.

HELIOS

And what do you with your fishing-rod, friend?

THE FISHER

I fasten maggots to it and catch fishes with them. I catch fishes. I have taken to that trade. But of hundreds that I catch often not a single one is eatable. Either they taste of the slime, or else — and this happens usually — I burst their gall-nut. Try as I may, I always bring home bitter fishes. Then they are fit swill for the swine — nothing else.

HELIOS

You should get out into the sun, good friend.

THE FISHER

The roasting hen on the spit is more likely to grow wings and fly into the air than the sun is ever to shine on me again.

ALF

Then at least we shall let the moonlight come in.
[*He opens the door and lets the night air in.*

HELIOS

It is wonderfully strange here.

THE MINSTREL

Beware, boy!

HELIOS

Are you speaking to me?

ALF

He said: Beware — and, truly, I say the same to you: Beware! The fire of the eternal mother still glows in you. You carry in your eyes the pride and happiness and radiance of the night. I do now know whence you have come. But your gait is not heavy like our gait. At your laughter the bats are frightened and flutter away in haste. But the powers of the night are many in our land. And I should be sorry for you, O child of the sun.

HELIOS

I am not afraid.— Hallo! You! Kitchen boy! Why do you nod at me in secret? Do you, by any chance, know me?

THE BOY

[*Scraping a carrot, laughing foolishly to himself and with an air of embarrassment.*] To be sure, I know you.

HELIOS

Did you perhaps study with me at Salamanca?

THE BOY

[*Giggling.*] You are not what you seem.

HELIOS

[*Tweaking the* BOY'S *ear.*] Hold your tongue now, little pig that you are. Do you understand?

ALF

[*At the door.*] Do you hear that dull and iron roar? That distant tumult? It is the sea!

HELIOS

Is it the sea? The great, pagan sea?

ALF

Aye, it is the great — pagan sea! And beyond there, leaping in the moonlight — the white foam-horses . . .

HELIOS

The surf. I must go thither! I must see the ocean. I must behold the great pagan sea! I have longed for it — longed for it! I have pressed great, roseate shells to my ear and listened for days to their roar and their whispering and their mysterious speech! Let me go out! I must go thither! The sea! The great pagan sea! I greet you! I come to you! Only wait! Hold a dolphin in readiness for me — it is to carry me to Helixoia!

ALF

What is Helixoia, boy?

HELIOS

Do you not know it? Then you must let my father tell you, man. There lives a people, quite different from yourselves. And in every nineteenth year Apollo descends to this people. Dancing he comes, playing the cithara, accompanied by circling swarms of singing swans. Oh, I salute you, O sea!

ALF

Have you never yet seen the sea?

HELIOS

Never! No! I would go thither!

ALF

You cannot reach it from here. You would sink in the swampy water.

HELIOS

I shall jump across the swamp.

ALF

I hear the beat of oars. Be silent! It is the hour at which the king is wont to row out.

HELIOS

May one not see him if one keeps oneself hidden?

ALF

Be quiet and do not stir.

HELIOS

Is your king ill?

ALF

[*With emotion.*] Yes.

HELIOS

Is your king beautiful?

ALF

Our king is beautiful and sick.

HELIOS

It is said that his head is like the white lily that rests upon the black water . . .

ALF

Be silent! There he is.

HELIOS

Why does he row out — alone — in the night!

ALF

Not one has discovered why. But our fishermen say that in silent nights one can hear, out there, deep from the bottom of the sea, the ringing of chimes. And they say that he who has once heard those chimes must hear them again and again and consume himself in yearning for the depth.

HELIOS

Has your king heard those chimes?

ALF

No one can tell you that.

HELIOS

Is your king young?

ALF

He is thirty years old. Do you hear how slowly he dips his oars into the water? Watch! Now you can see the silver cross on the prow of his shallop. He is rounding the point of the alder trees. There . . . now the moonlight is shining into his face.

HELIOS

[*In rapture.*] I see him. I see his face. [*He stares out, lost in the vision.*

THE MINSTREL

There is a young king. And something draws him into the darkness. A heavy dream enfolds him . . .

THE END OF THE FRAGMENT

PASTORAL

THE FIRST ACT

The poor Artist *lies on the couch of his studio. A strong and virile* Angel *steps forth from the hangings that divide the room.*

The Artist

What wouldst thou?

The Angel

Oh, why liest thou idle and sad
Upon thy couch all through the endless days
And dost not stir?

The Artist

I am hungry! I am weak!

The Angel

Arise! Fare forth and seek thy bread i' the world!

The Artist

I would not!

The Angel

He who is too full of sloth
To take the nourishment God meant for him . . .

The Artist

The bread from the street's filth to me is still
Abominable. Let him bend who cares

To pick it up. If God can give me not
A purer meat I cannot be His guest.

The Angel

Thou sinnest!

The Artist

Nay, not I! 'Tis God who sins.

The Angel

Now thou blasphemest!

The Artist

God blasphemes, not I!
For who, as I, have served him with true soul?
Purely I have guarded Him His own pure flames,
So why denies He me the sacred oil?
I would not feed it with the fat of swine.

The Angel

What God hath purified thou must not soil.

The Artist

What wouldst thou and who art thou?

The Angel

I am thy angel.

The Artist

And my good Angel?

The Angel

Aye.

The Artist

Dare I believe it?

The Angel

Regard me from my crown unto my feet:
Thou findest in me neither lack nor lie.

The Artist

Delusion and naught else! For look, I lie
Fevered with hunger and with darkness here,
Alone, forgotten mid rubbish old and dust,
And my sick brain doth paint thine image fair
In empty space!

The Angel

Grasp thou mine hand in proof.

The Artist

Why grasp it? It seems strong and yet is not.

The Angel

Thou knowest it not!

The Artist

Thou jeerest! If it were
Not weak and vain, that angel's hand of thine,
I would not lie here conquered and unstrung!
Nay, nay, away, thou hollow phantasm, thou . . .

The Angel

I am no phantasm!

The Artist

From the ferment wild
Of this vast Babel art thou risen up,
Out of its bubbles and its poisoned damps!

Hear how it roars and shakes! This city buries
Me and my purer light!

The Angel

Thou errest, friend.

The Artist

Phantasm, away with thee! Write, if thou wouldst,
Thy "mene mene tekel!" on the wall,
Thou frightest me not.

The Angel

Arise, for Spring is here.

The Artist

I can but laugh.

The Angel

And I would have thee laugh!

The Artist

I can but laugh a bitter laugh. Thou speakest
As though thou wert grandeur and might itself —
Poor, borrowed splendor of my fancy's grace!
Live, if it please thee, yet a little while!

The Angel

Feelest thou not a streaming from my wings
Fragrant as flowers that by the river blow?
Seest thou not the meadow's rivulets
Run through small channels over sparkling stones?
Behold: a violet here! A daisy there!
Rest thee but yonder on that warmer slope

Where gently, yet enraptured, scarce awake,
A butterfly is faltering in the sun.

The Artist

O my far homeland! O white butterfly!
O Spring and land of youth and freedom's land!

The Angel

Why tarriest thou? Arise and follow me!

The Artist

Into the grave?

The Angel

Into thy homeland follow!

The Artist

O Gabriel, for thus I name thy name,
Even because thy words like prophecy
Burn in my heart — even though I know it well
That thou art naught and speakest naught but lies . . .
O Gabriel, O phantom, well I know
The path that I must tread if ever I
Emerge from this dark chamber! I must slink
Through desolate, far lanes and I must creep
In cellars full of the acrid stench of drink,
And gorge repulsive viands and inhale
The vapors of corruption. Even where
Vice like a pestilence corrodes all life,
Where infamy shames God and man himself
A beast distorted wallows in the slime —
There is my dwelling: thither leads my way!

The Angel

Thou errest!

THE ARTIST

In truth I err. A labyrinth
This city holds me in which now I err
Through twenty weary, heavy, empty years.
Its alleys are fulfilled of acrid smoke.
Here night is like to day and day to night.
Here are the cry of lust, the cry of pain
Two brothers! Aye, twin-brethren, more than that:
They are wholly one, inseparably blent.
And ever rises but that one, sharp cry
Of the poor, driven soul! Sleep is not sleep!
Waking not waking there, and peace itself
An ancient, dead and long forgotten word.
Seek thou then peace, O Angel Gabriel,
And bring it me! Vainly wilt thou fare forth,
Nor in the market-place nor in the lanes,
Oh, not in churches nor in palaces
Dwells the white dove of thy long, frustrate quest.

THE ANGEL

Have faith in me! The city hath gateways! Come!

THE ARTIST

Give me thy hand. That was a weighty word.
Aye, lead me on, O thou dear prince of peace —
For that I know thee now — unto my gate.
Open it softly, let me gently out.
Oh, if I could but trust thee! Lo, I am
A cork upon the broad and violent stream,
Reft of all will. Courage I cannot find,
That ultimate courage many a one has found
And so has found his freedom. Oft and oft

I thought my soul was ready and my hand
Upon the gate . . . always I trembled back.

The Angel

Then come and trust me.

The Artist

I cannot! Go!

The Angel

What holds thee back?

The Artist

My work.

The Angel

What is that work?

The Artist

The work for which I lived.

The Angel

And didst thou live
Always for the work's sake?

The Artist

Always, in truth!
What justifies my life if not my work?

The Angel

Justifies thee with whom?

The Artist

Before my brethren!

THE ANGEL

— Them whom thou leavest in the city of woe
They ask not after thee nor yet thy work!
Go thou from them even as thou camest once!
Neither of thee know they nor of thy work.
Come then!

THE ARTIST

Not yet. O Phantom, get thee hence!
If I should need thee I will speak thy name.
Thou cam'st too early, stayd'st too long! Ah, go!
I must obliterate thee from my slate
Like white and chalky lines that once I drew.
Thou standest? No more art thou than a breath.
Gone are the ages when the angels of
The Highest walked in equal converse linked
With mortal men.

THE ANGEL

Again thou errest!

THE ARTIST

[*Arises and, as in an intense dream, approaches the easel.*

So,
If thou wouldst not depart, stand still O phantom!
Stand still and with my brush I'll hold thy shape
Fast on the canvas here.

THE ANGEL

What is that work?

THE ARTIST

Rachel beside the well.

The Angel

Pitiable man!
How canst thou paint what never thine eyes have seen?
What knowest thou of that strong, slender vine
In Israel's garden? Vainly stretchest thou
Thy hand toward its young grapes. And howsoever
Thy soul be famished after heavenly sweets,
And yearns for them in pain — it knows them not.
Rachel was fair . . .

The Artist

I know!

The Angel

What knowest thou? Naught!
Such was she that who saw her cast himself
Down before God, stammering, contrite, in prayer.
She was a woman . . .

The Artist

Once I saw her — once!
'Twas in a dream!

The Angel

Rachel was beautiful . . .
So beautiful that thy dark dreams steal light
From her mere shadow. And this shadow's shadow
Were glory enough upon thy canvas there:
But 'tis denied to thee!

The Artist

O Rachel! Rachel!

The Angel

Thou sighest! Seven years did Jacob serve
For Rachel and the long years seemed to him
Only like days, such was his love of her.
And never did God bless a child of man
More bountifully than was Jacob blessed
With these seven years.

The Artist

O Rachel, vision, thou!
Even for thy shadow's shadow I have served
Thrice now seven years and I have served in vain.

The Angel

For Rachel serve ye all! Aye, so it is!
For Rachel's shadow.— And this age's storm
And war and tumult are but for her sake.
But Rachel's shadow flees the while they fight:
It flees forever! Poor dupe, follow thou me!
All that thou waitest for — it is not here.
But I shall lead thee to the land of dreams,
Radiant cloudlands glorious whence comes
All that we are forever famished for.

The Artist

I have been given dreams enough ere now.
O Gabriel, their many colored mists
Oppress my heart and brain and smother me.
If thou wouldst lead me, lead me to the light,
The bright, clear sunlight of the newborn day!
With dreams thou frightest me! Once only let
The pure, great morning tear asunder all
The web of dreams. Give me that entire life
That's in no need of dreams!

The Angel

Fool that thou art!
The life that's in no need of dreams is — death.
Look now about thee!

[*Darkness falls and the scene changes.*

The Artist

Where, Oh where are we?
Art thou beside me still, O Gabriel?
How long must we now wander through this dusk?

[*One sees the shapes of the* Angel *and the* Artist *emerge from time to time as though they were two pilgrims. The* Angel *leads.*

The Angel

Far in the East, above yon hill, behold
A narrow cloud bearing a gradual gleam!
Thence the great light arises, thence will soon
A new day unto us be born and dawn.

The Artist

I am thirsty! I am weary! Let us rest.
Long was the night and full of shards the way.
We have climbed over menacing ravines,
Passed lonely narrows, glaciers. We have swum
Over cold rivers that with tumult dashed
Out of the monstrous cliffs. Oh, my teeth shake
With frost. But soon the hot waves will arise
And fill me with a glow that wearies me.
I shall stay here and fare not farther on.

The Angel

'Tis well! Then as our resting place shall serve
A mossy stone on yonder hillside warm.

And thou shall slake thy thirst from that strange well
Which has for ages sanctified this spot.
Oh, many wanderers from Heaven and Earth
Its waters have refreshed. Drink thou now, too.
And — Jacob! Stretch thine hands out! Over thee
Beckons and waits the fig-tree's fruit that thou
Mayest taste thereof and eat, and be made strong.

[*The scene changes. By the light of a gradual dawn one sees the* Artist *and the* Angel *sit beside a spring that gushes from the rocks. Out of the cliff above them emerges a mighty fig-tree. Far as the eye can reach there are meadows and gently rolling hills dotted by groups of immemorial trees.*

The Artist

Lord, it is good to be here! — I knew not
This for Thy dwelling, Lord! — O Gabriel,
Thou friend and mediator, lo, I am
Secure and near the Eternal Goodness here!
I have come home unto my father's well.
And he with that great hand eternally
Faithful gives me the cup, gives me the fruit
Wherein is life in truth. Ah, let me kiss them:
The sacred fruits I kiss, the sacred cup
And fall upon my face and worship here.

[*A flush of dawn suffuses the sky.*

The Angel

But I now in God's morning raise aloft
The sword. Flames let it catch from heavenly fires

And to the world a flaming token be!
For, friend, where'er this sword burns not for us,
There are the empty sockets of the blind,
Compared unto our utter darkness — light!
Sources of light, and blessing, grace and wealth!
Hark to the bells of herds!

The Artist

Unto mine ear
Comes no sound but of my own voice and thine.
Oh, I have never known of such a place:
Immeasurable meadowlands all green,
And mighty forests full of foliage
O'er giant trunks. And groves that tremble and stir
And twinkle when the innumerable leaves
Shake in the breeze.— Here would I build me huts!
What seest thou?

The Angel

'Tis yonder herd I see
Which slowly grazing, climbing ever higher
The gentle slopes approaches now this well.

The Artist

Where?

The Angel

Yonder? Hearest thou not the bells.

The Artist

I hear
The bells at last. I see kine wander there
Led by the glossy steer who, grazing, bends
Low his black neck in the ascent, and there,

Herdsmen I see beyond. So tell me now
This land's name and their name who dwell in it.

The Angel

[*Calls through his hollow hands.*
Herdsmen! Here is a man who, knowing not
This land, asks who ye are and whence ye fare
And how ye call this land where your herds graze!

The Artist

I hear their laughter.

The Angel

Wherefore laugh ye? Speak!—
Because I am an angel and yet ask.
Have patience a little.— Even now I hear
The deep breath of the beasts . . .
[*Two young* Herdsmen *appear.*
Calmly do thou
Address them.

The Artist

Who are ye?

First Herdsman

We are Laban's herdsmen!

The Artist

And what is this land's name?

First Herdsman

Mesopotamia.

The Angel

Let not thine eyes seek me in dread surprise:
Thou canst believe what these men say to thee.
How fares it then with Laban, your great lord?

First Herdsman

All things fare well with him.

The Angel

And Rachel?

First Herdsman

Oh,
There is no foal in Laban's herds that is
So strong and fair.

Second Herdsman

If thou wouldst wait for her!
She leads the lambs behind us to the wells.

The Angel

I cannot wait. My period is full.
Farewell now, Jacob! Henceforth needest thou
No guide at all. The children of these pastures
Are in the care of the Eternal Father,
This garden's Father to whom now I speed
And whose strong heart doth love you, whose great arm
Is stretched out over you and o'er your herds.

The Artist

[*Gazing after the disappearing* Angel.
He floats away in space. Lo, his great wings
Spread out like mighty sails. Calmly he floats
O'er valleys, rivers, lofty tree-tops on —
And, upon earth, his shadow follows him.

First Herdsman

Whence comest thou, O stranger?

The Artist

Askest thou me?

Second Herdsman

We would so gladly know where is thy home.

The Artist

Know ye what dreams are like? Nay, ye both shake
Your dusky heads. Then what would it avail
Were I to tell ye that I have come afar
Even from the land of dreams!

First Herdsman

And what thy goal?

The Artist

I have reached it now. I hear a sound of song . . .?

Second Herdsman

'Tis Rachel leads her father's lambs to drink.
Hail, daughter of Laban!

The Artist

Is it Rachel comes?
[Rachel *appears.*

Rachel

Ana and Magdiel, I seek ye here.
Not well ye guard the beasts that scatter far
And leave the herds. Lead them unto the springs
And give them water.

First Herdsman

We await your brethren, Rachel!
We are not weak, but no two mortal men
Can raise the heavy stone that hides this well.

Rachel

Ye are not weak? And yet too weak for this?
What shall be done? For the lambs cry aloud
For water, water!

The Artist

[*With sudden determination.*
Call them, daughter of Laban,
Call thou thy sheep and I will roll away
The stone that hides the well. O herdsman, drive
Hither your cattle and thereafter bring
The sheep of Rachel to the water here.
For new herds swim into our ken afar
Wandering hither in thirst. So haste ye now
Lest the great herds be stalled, steer tread on lamb,
Or even the lambs themselves crowd to their hurt
And fall and be destroyed. Haste to your work!

First Herdsman

First let us see thee do the deed which once
Vainly did try an Angel of the Lord.

The Artist

'Tis well.
[*He rolls the stone away.*
Away, and do my bidding now.
[The Herdsmen *withdraw with signs of horror.*

RACHEL

O mighty stranger, now I bid thee welcome!
For thou art well inclined to us, it seems.
And, if it please thee, I shall lead thee on
Unto my father's tents. Not far from here
In shadow of a valley are they pitched.

THE ARTIST

Ye live in tents?

RACHEL

[*Proudly.*

Immeasurably rich
Is Laban, far as thou may'st set thy foot
In wandering thirty days, the land is his.
And his innumerable camel herds,
And herds of sheep and asses, goats and cattle
Cover the earth for many miles about.
And for the great herds' pasturage we fare
From place to place.— And I am Laban's daughter.

THE ARTIST

Even without riches art thou rich enough.
But tell me, O thou flower o' the wilderness,
Will then thy father who is so great a lord
Receive and welcome one who brings him naught
But poverty alone?

RACHEL

I see thine eyes
As after long sleep full of wonder are.
And because suddenly the herdsmen waked thee,
Thy questions have a strange, mysterious sound.
But I hear Lea's voice! O Lea, sister!

Here grows a herb will heal our father's wound.
It throbs and will not close and gives him pain.

Lea's Voice

Who has rolled the great stone from the sacred well?

Rachel

[*Hesitatingly.*

I know it not.

The Artist

Why didst thou say that, Rachel?

Rachel

I would not have her come and look on thee,
For other thoughts have risen in my heart.
Before I lead thee unto Laban's tents
Where all my father's wives will crowd about
And little children to thy garments cling . . .
Where thou must eat and drink and tell thy tale,
Thou must in the great silence speak some words
To me alone.

The Artist

What shall I tell thee? Ask!

Rachel

Oh, I would hear thee only, hear thy voice!
Naught else. Tell me, relate to me whate'er thou wouldst,
Whither thou farest, whence thou camest here,
And from what folk thou tracest thy descent . . .
Whatever thou wouldst grant my heart — Oh, tell!

The Artist

Have patience but a little, till my soul
Clears and from clear wells clarity may draw.
Before thou camest did an angel leave me
Who was my guide upon a darkling road.
Whence that road issued? Did I myself but know!
Fruits I ate from this fig-tree, and straightway
When I had eaten, all my yesterdays
Died in my heart. Scarcely had I sate down,
After dark woes and endless wanderings,
But that I seemed at home, and from me fell
The weight of exile. Solitary and lost
I was, who am now no more lonely, being
Near to my Father, near his power and love.

Rachel

From a far country that is Canaan called,
And from my father's sister came a word
By wandering herdsmen brought, even as we are,
Saying that she had sent Jacob, her son,
That he might choose him, after wayfaring,
A wife among the daughters of my father.
Behold, I think thou art he! Thou art Jacob,
The son of Isaac, the great patriarch,
And of Rebecca, my own father's sister?
If thou art truly he who was foretold
Then speak — and for no other will I wait.

The Artist

I am he and yet am not!

Rachel

Surely thou art he!

The Artist

How knowest thou that?

Rachel

Beside the fire I lay,
In the bright noon, lonely, amid the sheep.
Something came over me. I took the girdle
Wherewith my body I gird and threw it straight
Into the flames. Utterly 'twas consumed.
And as the tall smoke unto heaven rose,
I spake unto our God. I said: God, Lord,
If there appear a solitary man
Who, being unbidden, rolls for me away
The great stone from the well — let that be
Jacob!

The Artist

What I am unto thee — that I will be!
Was ever king so royally received?
O Rachel, since thy God hath led me thus,
I may no longer now deny the name
He bids me bear. I am he whom thou seekest.

THE SECOND ACT

The tent of LABAN *in the background. In the foreground an altar built of stones. Upon a stone sits* LABAN. RACHEL *stands before him.*

LABAN

Welcome, O Rachel, thou my dearest child!

RACHEL

I thank thee, lord.

LABAN

Where dost thou keep thy sister?

RACHEL

Thou askest after Lea? I know not, lord.
The old man who at evening makes the rounds
Among the camels, crooked Simeon,
Called me before thee. I made haste to come.
Of Lea I have had no word at all.

LABAN

But ye avoid each other, thou and Lea!
Lift up thine eyes unto me, child. I know
More of thy secret thoughts than thou, even though
Thou veilest them beneath long eye-lashes:
For Jacob's sake ye are at variance.

Rachel

Lord,
We are not at variance.

Laban

Sit and hear my words,
For I have many things to speak of. Hear!
When on the morrow morn the sun doth rise
To drive the darkness from our pasturage
And from thy father's flocks, 'twill mark the day
On which, seven years ago, thou didst lead hither
A man unto our tents who proved to be
Jacob the son of Isaac.

Rachel

True, dear lord.

Laban

Among my people he was well received,
And by us all with joy. For three long days
Feasting there was and sacrifice of thanks.
We ate and merrily drank and it did seem
As though of game and dance and harp-music
There were to be no end. Aye, Jacob was
Received like to a prince; Rebecca's son
Was honoured like a child of my own loins.
These are the self-same trees under whose shade
The cymbals crashed that day. Look round about!
For where my tents stood seven years ago
There did I bid my serfs pitch them to-day,
Even on the very spot. Rachel, behold:
White is my head, whiter than silver is
My beard. I longed for him. Again would I

Be glad with Jacob. For from the first hour
My soul unto this man was well inclined.
The joyous music of those distant days
In which God gave him to me — oft since then
In silent nights it comes to me — I would
Hear it again!

RACHEL

[*Kissing his hand.*
Father! My lord and father!

LABAN

Thy thanks hurt me. I have deserved them not.
First let me speak, dear child. That thanks wilt thou
Perchance withdraw when thou hast heard what God
Bade me in dreams to do. To-morrow, then,
A wedding feast will be — Jacob's and Lea's.

RACHEL

Then let me too be present at the feast,
For I have woven me gay cloaks enough,
And Jacob who for seven years has served
Thee for my sake will thank thee that I am there.
Let me rejoice! For mine is Jacob, mine!
And because he is mine, in sacrifice
I will lay down my long, black, heavy hair
Upon thine altar, and my garments, shoes,
My favorite lamb, the steer, whate'er thou wouldst.

LABAN

Lea, thy sister, then, must pine away?

Rachel

Father, even before Jacob went away
From Canaan, he was mine. The Sons of God
Wooed me. I waited still for Jacob. Lo,
Him who is strong a mighty angel led
Unto us. Then ye ate together, drank,
And round about the valleys did resound
With noise of trumpets, cymbals and of harps.
Blessed to us the hour in which thou camest —
Such were thy words to him — and stay forever!
He stayed — he stayed for my sake — he served thee
For my sake only. He increased thy wealth
Immeasurably; from our single folk
Have grown two peoples through him. It is well.
Jacob is mine. What matters Lea?

Laban

Rachel!
Rebecca's stubborn soul doth rise in thee,
Even my sister's. Of her harsh intent
A part lives in thee, too. Oh, hadst thou been
But gifted with her wisdom, too. For Lea,
My child, like thee, passes her sorrowful days
In sighing, her rounded cheeks wax thin and wan,
Her eyes are without light, her life is sore
Stricken with weakness and with joylessness.
Thy sister withers like the stricken vine
Frost-bitten in its bloom. She deems herself
Cheated of all her future's golden fruits: —
And she is cheated, truly, as she deems,
Unless our fathers' God — a mighty God —
Take pity on her in the ultimate hour.

Rachel

'Tis Lea cheats herself. Jacob is mine!
Who takes him cheateth me. He cheats likewise
The gods who gave him to me, and he cheats
Him too for whose sake he has cheated me!
Jacob is mine.

Laban

O witless, Jacob is
No man's base serf, neither thine own nor mine.
Thine is the maid-servant I gave thee, thine
The man-servant, the dog, ass, camel, too,
The sheep, the goat. All that thou takest still
Out of my bounteous hands, the tent above
Thy head, the couch beneath thee, all these things —
Albeit mine as thou thyself art mine —
Belong to thee and may with equal right
Be called thy very own. But this man Jacob
Was born to rule. No woman's girdle may —
Not even thine who art so beautiful —
Bind him so that he lie like to a bullock
Ready for sacrifice. Himself will slay
The hecatombs of God and make himself
The covenant of the mighty. He is no slave.
Blind is thine eye that doth not recognize
What is so truly unworthy of Jacob! Go!

Rachel

If Jacob be not mine, then I shall die.

Laban

Go to the huntsmen. Let them snare for thee
An eagle, cage it, inconsiderate child!

And watch it till men jeer at thee therefor;
Then come and speak of Jacob. Until then
Live thou or die. This one thing, by mine ire!
Like one bereft of speech from birth shalt thou
Wander about these days. In fear and trembling
Obey my firm command and seek not Jacob.
[Lea *appears.*
Woe if thou dare to kick against the pricks!
Approach, O Lea
[Lea *approaches.*
Take each others' hands!
Ye are of one blood! So shall ye be one some day
Of one heart, too. Go with my blessing, child.
[Rachel *goes.*
Bring me a jug and beaker from my tent.
I am thirsty.— Speak to me . . . Tired is thy gait,
Shy and unsteady thy glance! What ails thee?

Lea

Naught.

Laban

Then Silpa, thy maid-servant, lied to me,
Who came and said: Lea is worn and ill;
She will not drink of milk nor eat of bread,
Nor of the sacrificial meat partake.
But I, thy lord and shepherd, loving thee
Would have thee wither not before thy time
Like grass in summer. Come, confide in me.
I see thy lips move but I hear no word.
If any illness at thy being gnaws,
Thou knowest that the kindly gods have lent
Me knowledge of healing herbs and simples strange.
But if to these thy sickness will not yield,

Then even for thy dear sake may each tenth beast
In all my flocks fall as a sacrifice.
Or weighs there rather on your secret soul
A wish, a yearning for what seems to thee
Utterly unattainable? A wish
That yet thou art forced to wish with such deep glow
As smoulders and consumes all other thoughts?
Tell me of it! Behold, great is my might,
And can grant many things.

LEA

Then grant me, father,
One little thing . . . Lord and father, send me
Unto thy pastures by the river banks
That lie toward the sunset, with thy herds.
Bid me and Silpa fold even to-day
Our tent and on the camels place it — then
Go far away from here.

LABAN

Ask what thou wilt,
Only not that thing, Lea! Dost thou not know
How all our folk prepareth for the morrow?
The women bake, the man-serfs slay the beasts,
And the full wineskins lie in endless rows.
We cannot want thee when in Jacob's honor
The songs of praise resound. And thou must not
Withdraw thee from thy father's eye that day.
For ancient herdsman that I am, I would,
Blind to all my innumerable flocks —
Go seeking only for the one lost lamb.
And that I would not do. To-morrow all
I have must be mine own. Naught can I spare.
Rich sacrifices to the dead will flow

But they who are in the light shall with full hands
Take wine and bread even from my bounteous board
And with me be rejoiced and with me feast,
That in the fervor of our joy ye all
May blend with me. And from your myriad hearts
Who have all sprung from me, my heart shall grow,
And all our thousand pulses beat as one.

LEA

Then may God grant that my own heart do not
Break on that day.

LABAN

Then arm it, my dear child,
Not against suffering but against joy!
For on the morrow when the loud feast dies,
And when the wreaths fall from the revellers' heads,
And the fires only glow and in the realm
Of heaven only the moon and the clear stars
Reign over the mild night — then shalt thou, Lea,
Hearest thou me? Thou — and not Rachel — thou
Shalt rest in Jacob's tent at Jacob's side.

LEA

O Rachel, my poor sister!

[*She falters.*

LABAN

Calm thy mind!
Whatever of sweet this chalice holds for thee

Drink thou it without fear. For Rachel's cup
Is likewise ready in her father's house.
Even while we speak the golden bees are up
And busy in the endless fields, the plain
Burns with its flowers. Take that which is thine own.

[Lea *kisses* Laban's *foot and departs at his nod.* Jacob, *one time the artist, approaches.*

Laban

O Jacob, son of Isaac and my sister
Rebecca, thou art thrice welcome unto me!
[Jacob *kneels.*
Thou kneelest down before mine age. Behold,
I lift thee up even for thy youth's sake.

Jacob

Thou honorest me, Laban.

Laban

Sit and speak.
Upon this stone shalt thou be seated, kinsman!
An hundred years ago it was my father's,
And is now sacred to my folk and me.
Be it a sign that I am grateful. Lo,
My heart is pleased within me when I mark
That thou, too, lettest me find grace the while
Before thine eyes. Come hither, then, and rest thee!

Jacob

Thou raisest me above my merit, Laban!
But ere thy serf in all humility
Bends before thy high will he must, erect,
Upon his own feet, tell of that which drove

Him onward for the space of three long days
Until he stood at last and saw thy face.
For I have sworn before the Lord, my God,
Neither to eat nor sit nor lie at rest
Before I have not freely, in thy sight,
Said that which stirs my soul.

LABAN

I hear thee, Jacob.

JACOB

O Laban, father and great patriarch,
Now that I am to speak my tongue grows weak.
What I have longed for, striven for without rest,
Now has its triumph's hour, and now my heart
That should rejoice is full of dread and sadness.
For this hour's sake I have served thee as I could;
Now it has come and it surrounds me with
A silent throng of fears and woeful shades,
And all that seemed to burgeon in mine hand
Withers away unto a sudden death.

LABAN

O thou dear home-brought stranger, hear my words:
In all the dream-meadows that are our God's
Early the sun arises in the east,
And sinks when evening comes, into the night.
And of each old day the evening is called woe!
And each new morning is called happiness.

JACOB

Father, thy words come to me as from the depth
Of Isaac's soul with a strange melody,
From a deep distance, even as a bird that flies

With slow and silent flight, and their intent,
Even like that dark bird's shadow throws a darkness
Athwart my soul's clear light.— Where am I here?

LABAN

Thou art in Canaan.

JACOB

And so in Paradise?
And that dark bird flies also here above
The boundaries of these most blessèd fields.
I thought not that at all.

LABAN

God makes his days
Of evening and of morning everywhere.

JACOB

I thought that not at all. Even here there come
His shadows nourishing their being dread
Upon our blood.

LABAN

O Jacob, turn thy vision . . .
What are the shadows of thy seven years?
Behold the shadows that surround my head!
Seest thou them not? Hither they throng and throng
Like flocks athirst to water. Look, I offer
Gladly and willingly to them my breast.
For a kind herdsman guards the shadows too.
And thou art a kind herdsman! Be at peace.

JACOB

Am I a kindly shepherd?

LABAN

Aye, thou art!
From all the herdsmen's fires rises thy praise
Like a clear flame that has no smoke to heaven.
As master thou wast just, as servant true.
I thank thee. And thou didst increase my herds,
Extend my lands, thou heldest in seemly check
My serfs, and ever stood beside thy couch
All night long peace, the golden, and arose
On argent wings each morning of the world
To float in blessing over all my fields.

JACOB

Am I a kindly shepherd? Was I that?
Wilt thou put such a crown upon thy grace
And call me that? Lord, I am naught at all!
I came with stormy soul to step before thee
And to demand. But seeing thy great face
All my poor courage melts. I am a beggar
Gifted by thee with seven blessednesses,
Even the seven years that I have served
For Rachel: For 'tis Rachel thou didst set
As my reward, in thy unmeasured goodness,
For all that sevenfold blessedness of mine —
As a reward for what rewards itself.
Give her, though I have served not nor deserved
And am unworthy of thee utterly!
Though I am dust, thy creature, witless, naught,
Yet give me Rachel, give me Rachel, father!

LABAN

Thou knowest what Rachel is? She is like unto
That star of stars which, far above my flocks,
Flames over all earthly things. Thou askest
much.

The Sons of God await her in the distance
Whenever she passes by until she bows
And Cherubim lower their eyes before her.
In all his heavens God created naught
That is so full of lovely blessedness,
And all His sweetness dwells enclosed within
The bosom of this child . . . Yet — take thou her.

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